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MONSIEUR NICOLAS

or

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

THE FIFTH VOLUME

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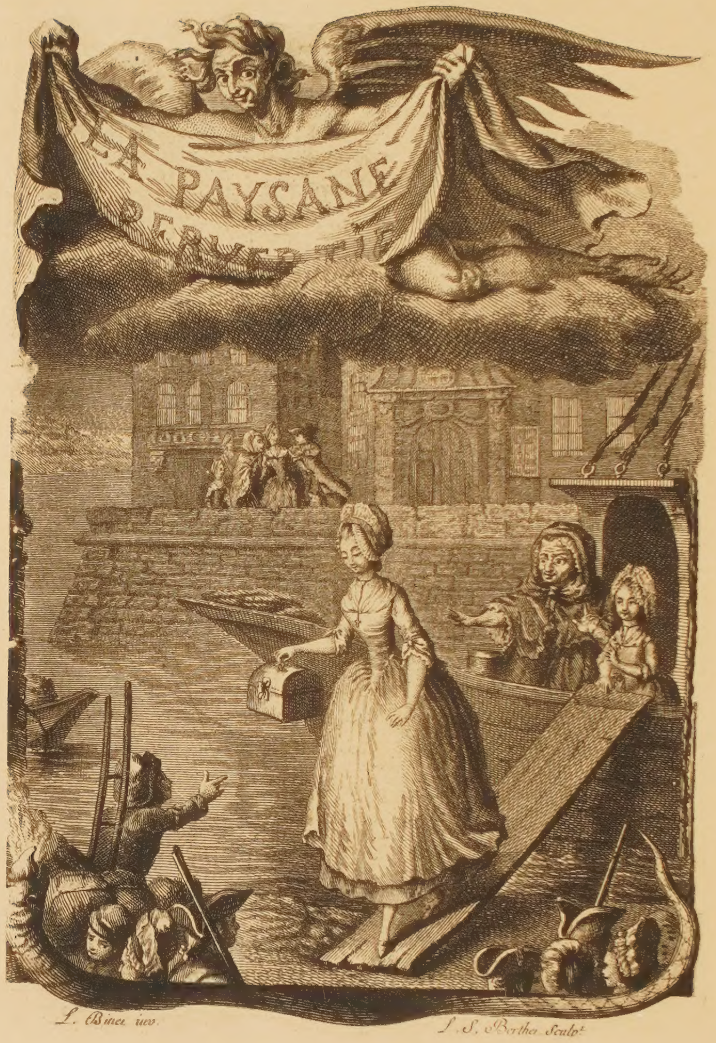
LA PAYSANE PERVERTIE

L. Binet inv. L. S. Berthet Sculp^{t}.

MONSIEUR NICOLAS

or

THE HUMAN HEART UNVEILED

The Intimate Memoirs of

RESTIF DE LA BRETONNE

Translated into English by

R. CROWDY MATHERS

Edited with an Introduction by

HAVELOCK ELLIS

VOLUME V

DISCARD

for subscribers only

JOHN RODKER · LONDON · MCMXXX

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THE
SIXTH EPOCH

Continued

1759-1765

SIXTH EPOCH

(*continued*)

ON the first of August, six days before my departure, for work had come to an end sooner than usual at Causse's, I had a full explanation with Mlle Teinturier's father over a glass of flea wine, as they call rape wine in Burgundy. I spoke of his daughter in terms of high praise, and indicated my desire to make her my life's companion. He was a good fellow in every sense of the term and he favoured my suit from the very first. Seeing that I could talk freely to him, I made no secret of my intention of returning to Paris. "You are quite right," answered the old hairdresser's clerk. "There is no place like the capital." As nothing remained to do save to ask my parents' consent, I told him that I was leaving at the end of the session to obtain this, and that I would write from home about the matter. Then we went back to his house. Manette, Mlle Duveau and Bachot were sitting in front of the door, and I sat down beside them, but without saying anything about this conversation. However Manette was called in by her father, and, as she rose to go to him, she made me a sign to stay where I was until she returned, which she did a moment later, having been told all about the step I had taken. She was animated and charming, and for a full hour we discussed my plans for putting myself in a position to marry. My idea was to go to Paris, find work as a journeyman printer and try to rise to the position of foreman.

Manette was the exact opposite of Rose in mind and character; as gentle, moderate and careless for the future as the Auxerroise was haughty, prudent and ambitious. She was completely satisfied with our conversation, content to leave everything to my ability with a trustfulness which one could wish to find in other women. When I expressed regret that I could not offer her a better position, she answered ingenuously: "Why should I expect more than anyone else? Life is a mixture of pleasure and pain: I look to have my share of trouble and shall consider myself very lucky if it does not come through you; but if it comes, one must put up with it. . . . I have never been in love till now; perhaps because, as I have no money, no one has ever courted me before, or perhaps because I have never met anyone who made me want to be loved; but since I have known you, I have longed to be rich and beautiful so that you would love me more." She spoke in the indolent manner which was natural to her and this added to the charm of her words; and they were, indeed, some of the most agreeable I have ever heard from a woman's lips. . . . For her part, the girl seemed equally pleased with the result of our talk. . . . (Did I again turn my back on happiness, that is to say, on a tranquil and peaceful life? . . .)

On leaving work next day, I went in search of Manette's father as on the previous day. His daughter told me that he had gone out, and suggested a walk with her Corsican sister-in-law, her brother, the musician's daughter and my fellow printer. We made a gay party. We walked to the Porte Neuve and followed the ramparts as far as the Porte Nicolas. Manette and I were behind the others, my arm about her waist; and my sweetheart's pretty face, with that air of languor which others called indolence, fired my young blood and I experienced that sense of exaltation which used at times to cause me such intense happiness! Manette had never had a lover, and knew nothing of the crises in that tempestuous passion; she was to be my wife, of this she was certain, and she behaved with all the complacent tenderness of her artless nature. . . . I led her aside from the path. "But what . . ." I dragged her behind a hedge and handled her somewhat rudely. "Oh well, if you want it, I suppose you must have it!" was the only defence she offered. She arranged herself to the best of her ability so as not to hinder me, asking at each attempt whether she was all right; and when I broke the virgin cestus, she exclaimed: "Oh, that hurt! Did it hurt you too?" That evening I resolved to make this attachment a serious one. . . . If this *analysis of my heart* is published within a short time and readers would care to know what Manette was like in face and figure, there is a pretty Parisian who is the image of her: Mlle *Mesaidrieux*, who used to be a pastry cook in the *Rue de la Vieille Bouclerie*, but is now married to the apothecary *Brogniard.* The comparison will show how seductive Manette Teinturier must have been.

On the 5th of August we had another delightful evening together among the lawns and trees of Montmusard. We ran about and played like children, and I found a thousand opportunities for stealing appetising favours from Manette. In the midst of our games, I saw, sitting at the foot of a tree, a fair Dijonnaise whom I had met in the Park the first time that Bachot took me there. I will go back to this incident.

Before I made the acquaintance of pretty Teinturier, and was still spending my evenings either with the Comtoise Marie Jehannin or with little Marianne Milan, I had had nothing to do on Sundays. One Sunday Bachot asked me if I would like to go to the Tuileries; I gazed at him in silent emotion, for the name brought back all Paris to me, all my friends, my Zéphire and my Zoé. . . . Tears were very near to my eyes. "It is a charming spot," he continued. "There is a beautiful wood there, with paths radiating from the centre in the form of a star." The Park is bounded on the South by the river Ouche (Oscaria), that here widens into a basin, the bed of which has been artificially deepened until it forms a fine lake of almost still water. The garden itself is laid out in groves bordered with young hornbeams, and these groves are full of flowering shrubs and every kind of fruit tree – plum, cherry, mulberry, walnut, apple, pear, chestnut, almond and so forth. I could not see a place so well suited to my mind and tastes without finding it delightful, and after Bachot had once taken me there, I often returned to it alone with a book.

But on my first visit to the Park my notice had been attracted by a tall and beautiful young woman; she was leading a pretty little girl of four by the hand while another girl, two years older and exactly like the lady, walked in front. I was studying this group with the greatest interest, when Bachot said: "Do you see that tall young lady, the pretty one? She is the mother of those two children. The father of the elder did something that she thought contemptible, and she refused to marry him; but she was not ashamed of her maternity, and brought up the child herself in defiance of public opinion. She goes everywhere with her children. . . . No one thought ill of her as long as she had only one; but in 1757 or thereabouts she produced another, which had apparently just been weaned. This made a lot of bad talk. One is all very well, people said, but two! . . . Mademoiselle *Omphale Cœurderoi* was undaunted, and brought up both daughters." "Better two than one, when they are so pretty!" I exclaimed. "But to whom does this Mademoiselle Cœurderoi belong?" "She is allied to a family of Lower Burgundy, which is extinct on the male side. . . ." I looked at Mlle Omphale and her eldest daughter with admiration; but the younger child excited an indescribable interest in me. She had an angelic face which, it seemed to me, I had seen somewhere else. I followed them with my eyes as long as they were in sight. I could not look at them enough. On the following Sunday I again saw the fair Amazon (for so I called her, since she did not want a husband) and gazed at her with as much interest as before, but she only had her elder daughter with her. Finally, on the evening of which I am speaking, I saw her with her two daughters and an elderly woman, who might have been her mother or an aunt. "I do not know why," I said to Manette, "but that young lady rouses my curiosity." "She is unmarried," answered Manette. "I have been told that those two little girls are her daughters?" I continued. "Yes; but my father says that she is none the less estimable for that, considering the way in which she came by them and the life she leads nowadays." "Look how earnestly she is talking to the old lady; let us see if we can hear what they are saying." Manette was willing, and we crept up silently behind the trees to within four paces of the group.

"No, no, Aunt," the children's mother was saying, "that is impossible! I will not betray the secret of so estimable a woman as . . ." "Very well, my child," answered the elder lady, "but you do not realise the harm that this second apparent indiscretion has done you! Those people who have condoned and even admired your conduct up till now are changing their tune. And indeed I cannot understand you myself! What is your object? For after all your honour suffers." "I cannot see that, Aunt. Look at those two children! If there is any dishonour in having given them life and beauty, I am content with my dishonour." "But you will never find a husband." "Possibly; but up to the present I have not wanted one, and the suspicion of a second lapse from virtue saves me from importunate suitors." "I cannot understand how your mother can allow you to do such a thing." "My mother knows me to be innocent on both counts. And another reason why she holds her tongue is that my father, if he knew, would force me into a marriage which ought not to take place. Blinded by passion, a man will marry a woman because he desires her, and then repent when he is sated." "I agree," answered her aunt. "But you have chosen a strange way to repulse your suitors." "I love the younger of these children as much as my own daughter, Aunt. Her character is as perfect as her pretty face. I was already in love with her when her mother entrusted her to us on leaving the Auxerre boat, although she was then scarcely two years old, and I promised that she should be my daughter's friend and inseparable companion. They will be as sisters to one another. I had no idea then of letting people think that she was mine; but when her mother died, and the poor child was left with no one belonging to her, I decided to be everything to her and to enjoy her filial devotion; for I felt as a mother to her. Moreover my Hypsipyle and little Edmée-Colette will be all the more attached to each other for thinking themselves sisters and this alone is enough to decide me; for this I would sacrifice anything. My mother, from whom I hide nothing, not even my most secret thoughts, approves of me in this as in the rest. . . . You have sworn not to divulge my secret: you will keep your promise?" "Yes, dear Omphale. But will this little stranger share your daughter's fortune?" "As to that, Aunt, I am thinking of consulting your husband, M . . ." (I could not hear the name), "as he is a Parliamentary Councillor. Edmée-Colette's mother transferred considerable sums to us at different times; and these remittances, which have been registered and invested and belong to the little girl, are equal to about half our fortune. Surely this will compensate Hypsipyle for the disposition which my father will make of his property in the belief that Edmée is his grandchild, so that I shall do no wrong to my own daughter, and, at the same time, give her a sister? Poor little girl! She has a father, but she is fated never to know him, as her mother did not tell us his name. I only know that he was an apprentice printer at the time, and took her as it were by violence; not through excessive depravity, but through excessive love; and that she herself was betrayed by her senses, and helped him against her will. Afterwards the young man bitterly repented of his action, and never again belied his deep respect for her. She intended to marry him to her younger sister, after he had been established as a master printer at Sens; and her father, who knew all that had happened, even to the rape, gave his support to her plans. But both father and daughter died; and the latter's husband, who disliked his former apprentice (then in Paris), married his young sister-in-law in a hurry to a man of Semur-en-Auxois. . . ."

She stopped speaking, owing to a slight movement of Manette's. For myself, I could have no doubt as to my part in this story; I was trembling with emotion and could scarcely breathe. A thousand ideas flashed across my mind, and of these the wisest was that of speaking to Mlle Omphale and making myself known to her. I felt exactly the same person as when I left Auxerre on the 1st of September, 1755. The ladies rose and went away with the two children.

Thoughts crowded into my mind. I remembered Flipote, and what Gaudet d'Arras had told me about the second night which I thought I had spent with her. . . . Flipote's substitute had been called something like Omphale, if that was not actually the name. But yes, she had been called by the name of that Lydian Queen who dismissed Hercules after being his mistress. . . . I was amazed by this encounter and by everything that I had heard; but above all by what concerned Mme Parangon and Mlle Fanchette! . . . "Then who can be the mother of this second child whom Mlle Omphale is allowing to pass for her own, though knowing she is not so? That estimable lady of whom she spoke must be Mme Parangon: but when and how was she pregnant? And why, as she was married, did she conceal her maternity? Heavens! I am beginning to understand! Her husband never penetrated her, and it was my assault that . . ."

I was still standing motionless. . . . "What is the matter?" asked Manette. "I am so much astonished." "I could not follow what they were saying" (so much the better, I thought). "What were they talking about?" "Well, it was rather complicated. . . ." "Yes, let us talk of something else." "I am only too willing. For example, we are soon to be parted. . . . I have only one more day with you." "And I am only just beginning to know you," answered Manette. "I do not know why, but my heart aches when you say that. Must you really go?" "I can hardly do otherwise, and the sooner I leave, the sooner we shall meet again. I am going so as to put my case to my parents by word of mouth, because that will be better than writing. If a letter were more certain to succeed, I would write and stay in Lyons while awaiting their answer." "Oh, rather than Lyons, go and speak to your parents. . . ." Then the rest of our party joined us, and conversation became general. As we walked back to the town, Teinturier's brother told us the story of Montmusard, which, though only just finished, was about to be destroyed, because its upkeep cost too much and had almost ruined the Premier-Président who owned it. (Thus do luxuries devour wealth and at the same time absorb half the territory in the kingdom!) When we parted, we agreed to meet for the last time next day at about three o'clock in the afternoon.

I retired to my room with my mind much fuller of Edmée-Colette and her mother than of Manette. In the light of what Omphale had said, I recalled certain phrases used by Tourangeot which I had not understood at the time; and these led me to assume that M. Parangon had discovered my secret paternity, though I myself was unaware of it (but how could he have conceived that his wife would have been discreet to such a point?) "So I am a father by my one and only love!" I exclaimed. "Oh, unhoped for happiness! . . . I am forced to admit that there is such a thing as Providence, for it was not chance that led me to Dijon; Providence willed that I should know my daughter. . . . I had lost everything, and I find another Colette! . . . Yes, I will see Mlle Omphale to-morrow, and disclose my identity; and supposing . . . I should have the good fortune . . . to persuade her . . . to become in fact Edmée-Colette's mother? . . . She is more nearly related to us than the other Cœurderois . . . everything gives me to hope! Farewell, Manette! Farewell, Michelle Gueneau! Farewell, appealing Sallins! You cannot touch me now; I long for none but Omphale!" Still busy with these thoughts, I fell asleep.

When I woke next morning the vision of Omphale, with her daughters on either side of her, filled my exalted imagination. I got up hurriedly and, running to my hairdresser Fleurie, implored him to excel himself as I had a gallant visit to make. He did as well as I could have wished. Then I dressed in my best, that is to say in a black suit, and waited on Mlle Omphale Cœurderoi. I asked for her by name, and was shown into her room; but her mother was present.

"I am unknown to you, Mademoiselle," I began, "and had meant to beg you for a private interview; but if Madame here is your mother, as I believe her to be, I can speak in her presence. . . ." They offered me a seat.

"Explain the reason of your visit, Monsieur," said Omphale. I had prepared my words, and answered without hesitation: "You have a child here, Mademoiselle, who is of the greatest interest to me. I know the secret of her birth, and I am the only person who does, save perhaps you. . . . She is called Edmée-Colette, and these are the names of her father and her mother. Her mother was Mme Parangon, who was killed by a grievous accident; she slipped and fell on her way to post a letter to this child's father, and was mortally injured. . . ." I held my peace. "I do not assent to anything you have said, Monsieur," answered Omphale after a minute or two's silence. "One word more, Mademoiselle, and perhaps you will trust me: the father of this sweet child of four was called Monsieur Nicolas . . ." and I gave my other names. . . . The two ladies reddened. "That may or may not be so," answered the mother. "We have not enquired into the matter." "Your discretion is commendable, Mesdames. . . . One thing in conclusion: I *am the man I have just named.* . . . But I do not ask you to make any comment until you have confirmed this. . . . I leave this town tomorrow to rejoin my parents. Here is their address, and, if you think it advisable, you can write to them on some other matter and yet frame your letter so that you will learn all that you want to know. To this address I will add, also in my own hand, anything that you may care to dictate, together with the words I am now going to write: 'I beseech Mademoiselle Omphale and her mother to believe that I have spoken the truth. . . .' And now," I said as I finished writing, "I will intrude on you no longer, Mesdames." "One moment, Monsieur!" exclaimed the mother. "What was your object in coming to see us?" "It was two-fold, Madame. This child is dear to me; I adored her mother, and I honour the lady who has replaced her, as a beneficent divinity." "These are very proper sentiments.

But what do you propose?" "Only to be allowed to know that my daughter is alive and happy, and to be happy in her happiness, without mentioning the matter to a single person." "You are an estimable young man, and we do not doubt that you are who you say you are." "Ah, Madame, your confidence in me is but just, but I beseech you to satisfy yourself in every possible way. . . . Then perhaps I might venture . . . to reveal . . . certain plans . . . of a somewhat larger scope, and . . . to speak about something . . . which would fulfil my every wish." I bowed respectfully and made to depart; but they detained me again. They asked about my family. I had expected this, and did not hesitate to mention my relatives in Dijon, adding my reasons for keeping at a distance from this family. Mlle Omphale blushed, and whispered something to her mother. . . . "But we are more nearly related to the Simons than the President or the Councillor . . ." said the latter. Then I told them about my father, and how much honoured and esteemed he was throughout our little Canton. I described the two families from which I issue almost as fully as I did later in the *Vie de Mon Père*. The two ladies smiled while listening to me, and seemed quite delighted. They invited me to call on them again and, promising to do so, I took my leave.

I dined with my printer. Bachot, noticing my abstraction, reminded me of my engagement at three o'clock with Manette, and I had not the courage to withdraw from it. We went to see the magnificent Montmusard which was on the point of being destroyed. Judging from its name it must always have been a pleasant spot wherein to rest or to amuse oneself: the word *musard* or *musarde* is still used colloquially among the people to mean a child who wastes his time by playing while at work or on an errand. From there we went to the Capuchin monastery to call on a certain Corsican Father, a fellow countryman of young Teinturier's wife; and I realised in the course of our visit how sad is the lot of a woman married to a foreigner and exiled from her own country! A woman is like certain plants, born to live and die upon her native soil. Swift as a bird, the young Corsican flew into the arms of the Capuchin directly she caught sight of him; she forgot that he was a monk; she only saw her native country, and it was that that she embraced: tears streamed down her cheeks and sobs choked her. The Capuchin was soon in the same condition, and we were obliged to tear them apart, after they had reminded each other of Bastia and its surroundings with a painful rapture which showed in their eyes and tones and every gesture. The Italian came to walk between Manette and me, and we did our best to cheer her: "How lucky you are," she said. "You love each other, and you belong to the same nation! Yet if my sister has to leave Dijon to go and live with you in Paris, she will find out what it means never to see the things one has seen all one's life! . . ." "If a woman loves her husband, sister," answered Manette, "his country becomes hers. My brother loves you, and you love him. . . ." "Ah, if I did not love him I should have been dead long ago!" "Then do not grieve, but rejoice with us. . . ." At once the poor Italian pretended to laugh and play; she seemed the gayest of the party, but tears lay behind her smiles. . . . "You spoke harshly to her," I said to Manette. "I have been told that it is necessary to do so," she answered, "to check her excessive emotion." I saw a magnificent terrestrial globe in the monastery, the work of a Father who had been forced into taking the vows. It had taken twenty years to make and had been his one distraction; when it was finished, he died of grief. The sphere was suspended from the poles at the proper climatic angle, and was constructed on the system of elongated poles, the one most generally accepted at the time when it was made. As it turned, all the countries of the world passed successively before the eyes, each one of them painted in a different colour and the seas a sea-green. The names of islands, towns and even the larger villages were all written in at the correct place and distance from each other. We were told that at the time when the theory of the ellipse was accepted, the Jesuits, who were then in power, had offered thirty thousand francs for the globe, and the Capuchins had refused it. In spite of its defect, this enormous work is admirable and worth all the geography books put together to its possessors.

We had something to eat in a little hamlet near the Capuchins. Then we went on to the Carthusians on the other side of the town, and here I saw the tombs of the ancient Dukes of Burgundy. Thus our walk lengthened out till nightfall, and, despairing of seeing Omphale and her mother at such an hour, I stayed with Manette from eight o'clock till midnight. So long a session with a pretty girl who had already given herself to me, following on the country air and our meal together, was to put our virtue to the proof, and we were not equal to the strain. I vowed so ardently that her favours would ensure my constancy (it was wrong of me to assert what was only true in a general sense; but I was to be punished for it!) that the simple girl was convinced. I made a pretext for going with her to her room, and there, using all the wiles of the seducer so as not to frighten her, I gently prepared the way to victory. . . . Manette had need of reassurance after this second triumph, and I soothed her with vows uttered in the convincing accents of truth. Thus I was again made happy, or rather I completed my ruin and that of my young friend. We spent about three hours in such love play, and then, as everyone had come home, I went back to the printer's for my last night. I saw Manette at her window, and bowed to her. She returned my salutation, saying: "I would like to talk longer to you, but you must rest before leaving to-morrow, with this hot, relaxing weather." "Good night," I said; "and may you be happier than I!" "That is impossible," she answered, "our happiness is one." Treisignies, who had just come in, thought this a very pretty answer.

Directly I was dressed next day (the 7th), I hurried to see Omphale. I was so early that I was obliged to wait for half an hour, but at last I was allowed to enter. The ladies regarded me with interest. Hypsipyle came into the room, leading Edmée-Colette, half-dressed, by the hand. They bade me kiss the child, and, overjoyed, I lifted her in my arms. "Blood speaks to blood," said Omphale's mother. Breakfast was served, but I was too much moved to do more than drink a little coffee. "Did you know Monsieur d'Arras at Auxerre?" asked Omphale hesitatingly. "Intimately, Mademoiselle." "Did you not have a strange adventure through him, with . . . a certain . . . in Madame Bourgoin's house?" "Flipote!"* I exclaimed. "It is he!" she said to her mother. And then, pointing to Hypsipyle, "That is the result. . . . Was it Flipote the second time?" "No, no! It was a lady of the middle classes," I answered, "or of a somewhat higher station. Friend d'Arras told me everything, but the name had escaped me until it came back vividly with your question." "Oh, indiscreet d'Arras! He knows everything, Mother!" "What," I exclaimed, "and this sweet girl . . ." "They are both your daughters. D'Arras told you everything . . . then judge for yourself whether I could marry the man who thought himself her father." I kissed Hypsipyle and we remained silent for a few minutes. . . . I was reflecting on the strangeness

*See Volume III, page 129. [Ed.]

of my life, which was, indeed, so singular that it emboldened me to make myself the hero of this work. As I could not unveil the secret motives of another's heart, it had to be myself or no one; but facts were also necessary, sufficiently interesting, striking and varied to absorb the reader, so that he could swallow the moral with the help of the story.

I felt quite at home when I sat down to table with my two children and their mother, and it seemed to me that I could make this delightful state of things stable and permanent. In Omphale I saw a second Mme Parangon, the well-spring of a happiness which for a long time I had not even dared to dream of. I was a father, and by Mme Parangon! . . . Also I was the father of little six-year-old Hypsipyle, whose beauty was already admired by everyone in Dijon. I saw the possibility of winning a rich and beautiful wife, belonging to a respected family connected with my own; and one who, through her children, was more suited to me than anyone else, even than Mlle Fanchette herself. . . . I was pleasurably engaged with these thoughts, which I did not dare to utter, when Omphale broke the silence to address me with a kind familiarity, which confirmed my most flattering hopes. She was fondling the two children who were sitting upon my knees, and glancing from time to time at me with complacent satisfaction. "Ah, God!" I exclaimed, "I must be in fairyland or in Elysium; for I have found my celestial Colette again . . . and her worthy father, Louis-Bénigne Collet, and everyone who loved me!" Omphale smiled, Edmée-Colette took my hand, and Hypsipyle caressed me, while Mme Cœurderoi urged me to eat. "I am all heart, and no stomach," I answered. Fair Cœurderoi smiled again: "That is the opposite of most people!" Bewildered and scarce knowing what I did, I rose to leave. I was suffocating with happiness. . . . Omphale rose also to show me to the door.

I was burning to talk to her in private. Directly we were outside the room, I seized her hand and kissed it again and again, saying: "Mademoiselle, I have lost the mother of one of those children, a woman whom I adored! But in you I have found all that I thought lost; and I consecrate every feeling that I had for her who is no more to Edmée-Colette's second mother and to the mother of Hypsipyle. . . . I shall do myself the honour of writing . . . what I dare not say more plainly. . . ." I kissed her hand again, and my daughters on the forehead. . . . Then I raised my eyes to Omphale: she seemed to be hesitating. . . . But not knowing what was in her mind and fearing lest I had been too bold, I bowed profoundly and left the house.

As I hurried away, I thought I heard Mlle Omphale call to me; but I did not immediately look round, and when I did so the courtyard door was shut. I should have been saved, if Omphale had persisted; for I have no doubt as to what she meant to say: "Stay here, and we will write to your parents concerning your decision."

As I was going home, I marvelled at all that had happened to me during my stay in Dijon, and especially at my adventure with Hypsipyle's mother. So thinking, I found myself at M. Teinturier's door before I was aware, and then I remembered that I was having breakfast with this family, to whom I meant to say farewell for ever.

We breakfasted gaily. Manette had never looked so pretty: a tender flush animated the natural whiteness of her skin; her manner was more vivacious than I had ever known it, her voice more sweetly tender than I had ever heard it. "Am I never to be happy," I thought sadly. "Am I never to taste pleasure unalloyed! But for Omphale I should have loved Manette, indeed at this moment I could adore her. . . . And perhaps I shall have neither Omphale nor Manette! . . . What madness not to have controlled my ardent senses with this girl! . . . Miserable wretch. . . ." "You look sad," said Manette, touching my cheek with her pretty mouth. . . . "What do you expect? I have to leave you!" The sweet girl pressed my hand and her beautiful eyes shone until two tears came to dim their brightness. . . . I was really unhappy when I said farewell to her. A bad deed is always followed by suffering; it was useless to invent a Hell to frighten wicked men. The pleasure bought by crime finds its natural compensation in the anxiety that follows after, and it is enough. . . .

M. Teinturier and his son escorted me out of the town. At the Porte Guillaume I caught sight of Marie Jehannin, whom I had not seen for six weeks. She ran up to me: "Are you going?" she asked, taking me to one side. "Yes. What I saw on the evening of the 21st decided me. Since then I have only remained in Dijon because I was obliged to." (I lied to women through weakness rather than any wish to cheat them; I should not have dared to say: "I do not love you any more," but I had no difficulty in saying: "I am running away because you make me unhappy."). . . . Marie wept a little; and my weakness for the sex led me to add: "If ever I become a priest, our agreement holds, in spite of what has happened. . . . Farewell, Mademoiselle Marie; I will write to you if it becomes necessary. Can you read handwriting?" "Very well." "Then I will write to you. I dare not kiss you, because there are people with me, but my heart is longing to. Farewell!" and I pressed her hand. On rejoining my companions, I told them that she was the girl who had looked after me when I first arrived in Dijon. At the parting of the old and the new roads, we embraced, and I went my way while they returned to the town. Twenty times I looked back at the father and son, saying with emotion: "Farewell, farewell, Manette!";

but they gave quite another interpretation to my gestures, and waved to me with every evidence of affection. . . . I left Dijon that day never to see Manette or her family again; nor yet Marie Jehannin, Marianne Milan, or my colleague Bachot; nor yet Hypsipyle, Omphale, or Edmée-Colette. . . . I felt this was so directly I was alone, for I exclaimed in anguish: "Ah, Dijon, suppose I should never see you again! . . ."

I walked on sad at heart and weeping tender tears. In the afternoon I was caught in a terrible storm of rain; the road was a river, which I could not have crossed if I had wanted to. Had I been thirsty, it would have been enough to turn my face up to the skies and open my mouth. I reached Vitteaux soaked to the skin.

I stayed at the same Inn as on my journey to Dijon, and there I found the young girl who had carried my bundle. I had no bundle this time, as I had asked Treisignies to send it by the Dijon coach as far as Noyers. Sweet Christine bustled about when she saw how wet I was: "Just look at me, Mademoiselle!" I said. She lent me one of her father's shirts, and gave me supper in bed, and saw to it that my clothes and linen were dried. . . . Next day I waited until everything was quite dry before setting out again. It was a fine day, and I enjoyed Christine's company until ten o'clock. I must confess that I abused the trust which Christine and her honest parents bestowed in me; but I neither tricked her nor did violence to her. I used that receipt which had given me the pretty Comtoise, and related some of my adventures. I made no promises . . . I chose this singular incident, which was purposely omitted from my account of 1757, to rouse the tempest of passion in Christine's virgin breast. It happened during my career of debauch with Gaudet, but it was one in which he had no share.

" One evening in Paris I was wandering down the Rue Saint-André-des-Arcs, near to the old *Porte-Bussi* which afterwards became the *Jeu-de-Boule* (and is now the Cour-du-Commerce), when my attention was attracted by an appetising woman who was opening the passage door into a house. I bowed to her and she smiled at me; she belonged to the gallant world, and I went in with her. She was well dressed, fresh-looking, and white as a lily. I paid her, as is the custom with such women, and she abandoned all her charms to me, giving me a voluptuous pleasure which a young virgin, such as yourself, could scarcely understand. In fact, I so much enjoyed our interview that I was tempted to return, and did so on the following Sunday during the daytime. 'I have nothing to do at this time of the day, my friend,' she said, 'so let us talk.' So we sat down and talked, caressing each other the while. I was holding her like this." (And I took the innocent Christine in my arms, and did almost everything to her that I had done to Victrice Darq.) "Time slipped away. . . . 'I am delighted with you,' said Victrice. 'You have delicate sensibilities and prelude like an angel: you seduce even me, a light woman!' " "That I can well believe," murmured Christine. " 'I want to introduce you to someone who may be useful to you; so come back on Friday between half-past three and four o'clock. . . .' I promised, and I kept my word. I worked very hard during the rest of the week so as to earn my half-day's holiday without damage to my purse. After dinner on Friday I dressed, girt on my long sword, and set out for the Jeu-de-Boule. There I found my buxom mistress waiting for me, with a lady about twenty-five or twenty-six years old. She was a trifle thin, but she was fresh looking, and her eyes were ardent; her skin was sallow and her lips pale, and yet she was provocative. Victrice sang my praises in front of me. 'He can't be equalled!' she concluded, and then left us, saying that she was going to fetch some food. Directly we were alone together I kissed the lady . . ." (I was doing everything to Christine that I described) "and, in a word, behaved exactly as I had behaved with the mistress of the apartment on the previous Sunday. . . . The lady marvelled at all the sweet nothings which I am showing to you. . . . We were left alone for about two hours. Then my plump mistress re-entered, followed by a pastrycook's boy, and Mme Doubleton (as I had heard her called) made her a sign that she was satisfied. We sat down to our meal, and, in the course of conversation, Mme Doubleton asked me if I was willing to belong to her, offering me a hundred louis a year, or two louis a week. I accepted. 'But I make one condition' (and it was a strange condition): 'that we meet on the same day every week in the same place, and that you give me an incontestable assurance of fidelity. . . . It is merely a mechanical affair; here it is. . . .' And she held it out to me. I tried it on, laughing. The thing did not embarrass me much. Mme Doubleton locked it and pocketed the key. The two ladies urged me to keep it on, Madame Doubleton slipped two louis into my pocket, and we parted. . . . I suffered little at first, save from a sense of humiliation; I felt I was being treated like a muzzled bear, or like a horse or ass which has been girthed and bridled. . . . On Friday I went to our meeting place and was unmuzzled; I caressed the lady, took my wages, and was remuzzled again. I suffered a great deal from irritability during the following week, and when I reached our meeting place I felt as cold as ice towards the lady; something about her aroused disgust, and I could not bring myself to satisfy her. No sooner was my bridle off, than I made a pretext for leaving the room, and never went back again. When I was in the street it was as though I had escaped from slavery; I was drunk with joy. . . . Neither the lady nor Victrice ever saw me again; the Jeu-de-Boule was forbidden ground, and I never entered it again until *Jorry* senior set up his printing works in the parlour of Victrice and Madame Doubleton. . . . But I have had many finer adventures than that, Mademoiselle Christine. I look on that one as the most shameful I have ever had. I never even told it to my other self, my friend Loiseau, whom I have just lost. You are the only person to whom . . . I have ever told it." And I kissed her. "Oh, how nice you are, and how beautifully you tell stories!" said Christine ingenuously; and her words were the signal of defeat. My tale had wrought the same change in me as the reading of erotic books; I was in a lustful frenzy. I put her on her back, and, stirred by the preludes which I had described and practised on her charms, she offered scarcely any resistance. . . . After this new offence against morality, which was interrupted by the arrival of two travellers, I departed, enraptured by this sweet child whose innocence should have had more power over my heart than her physical charms had on my senses. . . . I was full of inconsistencies at this time! . . . Ah, morality is as a string of pearls; undo the knot, and all are lost.

My next stopping place was Rouvray, where I passed the night with my Jansenist host and discussed the Bull of Unigenitus, the Jesuits, and the efficacy of Grace. I saw his wife, who must at one time have been a pretty woman, and his daughter, who was twelve years old. . . . The couple had a little argument during the night, from which I learned that Brother François had been so lustful during the early years of his marriage that he had caused his wife to miscarry six times before she managed to be delivered of little Toinette. He wanted me to stay on for a couple of days, to talk Jansenism with him, and I would have consented if he had been Christine's father. . . . I wrote a story about François of Rouvray's daughter in the *Année des Dames*. The same book contains many other stories, of which the germ is to be found in this one. (See the *March* volume.)*

On leaving Rouvray I noticed two women in front of me, at the junction of the Lyons and Dijon roads. I overtook them, and found that they were the two strangers who had arrived at Vitteaux during my interview with Christine, and who, finding no one in the public room, had come into the little room where we were talking. There was a great difference between their ages. The younger one looked to me like a pretty adventuress, and the old woman, who called herself her aunt, like a schemer who meant to take advantage of the girl's attractions. They were on their way to Paris and we went together as far as *Cussy-les-Forges*. I sounded them, and they put out some feelers: but both my heart and imagination were fully occupied at the moment, and my senses were quite indifferent on account of my morning's adventure with Christine. They were well aware of the reason for my momentary coldness, and the old woman did not scruple to rally me coarsely, calling me *Mr. Ever Ready*. "You will feel very differently to-morrow or the day after, when your appetite has come back," she added. But when I told these ladies that I was leaving the main road at Lucy-les-Bois, they lost all interest in my companionship. They paused at Cussy to refresh themselves, and arranged matters so that I lost sight of them. I did not look for them, and went on as far as Vassy without resting. This village is situated on the first of the western hills of Morvane, and I liked the place so well that I spent the rest of the day there. I asked for writing materials, and amused myself by writing an account of everything that had happened to me at Dijon. This I did in

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**Rouvraine*, Nouvelle 110.

my *Tertius Codex*, which had never been completely filled as I had lent it to Breugnot to copy out some verses, and he had taken it to Chatillon with him and kept it for eighteen months.

I was still lost in this occupation when, at about seven o'clock, a man on horseback arrived in Vassy. He had come from Cussy, and was stopping the night at my Inn. "Two ladies, relatives of mine, are following after me," he said. "Get supper ready for us, and prepare a room with two beds in it: the ladies will sleep in the same bed." This was done. For my part, I had supper at once and went to bed. I slept for several hours, but was wakened in the middle of the night by my neighbours, whose room was only separated from mine by a light partition. They were the cavalier and the two Lyonnaises. I gathered from their conversation that the old and ugly aunt, thinking that the supper which the man had provided was not worthy of her niece, had, on an agreed signal, adroitly taken the latter's place in his bed. Apparently he had not at first noticed this, because the niece had stood by the side of the bed while the aunt slipped into it. However the traces of long usage were too obvious to pass unremarked, and at last, to make quite certain, he got out of bed on some pretext, but without voicing his suspicions. He felt his way to the other bed and there discovered the fair niece plunged in profound sleep. He slipped into bed beside her, but, at his first attempt, she woke up screaming. The noise warned the aunt what was happening, and she ran to the victim's rescue; whence the brawl which had wakened me. "Gad, I will have the niece!" said the traveller. "I did not provide supper to get a chunk of old leather, a bit of refuse from the Place Belle-Cour at Lyons." The women made no answer, but defended themselves. At last the host, his wife, and the rest of the household burst noisily into the room; the two Lyonnaises were given an empty bed in the landlady's room, and the man was left alone. There were few questions or expostulations, and he made little attempt to explain; the two women did not say much either, and when I awoke next morning, they had all three gone.

I set out peacefully from Vassy, my mind occupied with my adventures at Dijon, and especially with the hope of winning Omphale's hand and living as one of the family with my two children, Edmée-Colette and Hypsipyle. I blessed Mme Parangon's memory with songs and cries: "Still, O Colette, it is you who are to make me happy! I shall win the fair Omphale, because you were her friend and I am the father of Edmée-Colette! It is to you that I owe Hypsipyle; because apart from you her mother would never have come to Auxerre; apart from you, Gaudet d'Arras would never have given her to me. . . ." I walked quickly after my rest. Lucy-le-Bois was in sight at the far end of the valley, and I was only ten leagues from home when I noticed the two Lyonnaises ahead of me. They were walking slowly, and I overtook them and greeted them politely. "We thought you were far away by now," they said. "I spent the night at Vassy, in the room next to yours, and heard you . . . making a considerable disturbance with a man." "It was the quaintest adventure," said the aunt. "The man was a stranger to us, and bribed the landlord to let him into our room while we were asleep. He threw himself upon my niece, she screamed, I defended her with all my strength; and when people came in answer to my cries, the wretch said that we had agreed to let him have my niece if he paid for the supper. A girl like that for a tavern supper! . . . I gave him the lie all right." "I know, I know, Madame; and that you generously sacrificed yourself, and went to bed with him to save your niece's virtue. It was very bad behaviour on his part to cross your praise-worthy plans!" "Very bad, I assure you!" answered the aunt. . . . "And that villainous landlord insulted us as we were leaving, but I cooked his hash for him. He could do nothing but set the riff-raff on us. We were pursued with hoots and stones; one hit me in the side, and another took my niece on the heel; the place still hurts her."* I marvelled to myself how facts become distorted by prejudice, but I had no wish to humiliate the women, so I pretended to believe their version, and spoke kindly to them. And who would believe it? Excited as I was by what I had heard during the night (for the sight or the suggestion of the erotic act excites even those who disapprove of it), I set myself to woo the niece. . . . I had been congratulating myself the day before on my escape from danger; for the niece was pretty and would have tempted me. I congratulated myself too soon. The aunt fell behind, we sat down in a ditch to wait for her, and the niece led me on. She stated that the woman with whom she was going to Paris was not her aunt, but a bankrupt neighbour who, having witnessed her misery when her lover was dismissed by her family, had advised her to follow him, at the same time offering to bear her company. This woman told her that her lover had written to her, but that her parents had intercepted the letter and burned it; and that all that she (the woman) had been able to find out was that he had a good position in Paris. Thus the woman had persuaded her to leave home, assuring her that she knew Paris and would be her guide. But the incident of the day before led the girl to suspect that the bankrupt had deceived her and did not know where her lover was. "While we were walking along the road between Cussy and Vassy after you had left us, the man on horseback overtook us. He saluted us, and, as my so-called aunt responded with a smile, he dismounted and

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*See *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 420-428, etc.

walked beside us talking. After we had gone about twenty paces, he set me upon his horse and began whispering to my aunt. At last he lifted me down again, and went ahead to order our lodging. Then my aunt began to prepare the way: ‘ My child,’ she said to me, ‘when we have found your lover in Paris, we shall not be much farther forward. Men quickly grow profligate in that part of the world. But you have excellent resources, and I can show you how to profit by them. That man, for example, desires you, and I have sold you to him for the night; but I shall not let him have you. You will see how I get out of it, for I have no intention of letting a country bumpkin profane your body; he will only have me. Then we must see how your lover behaves when we find him; and if we do not find him, for Paris is a big city, it will not trouble me; you can shift very well for yourself.’ Then I saw that the woman had deceived me, and had got me away from home with the intention of selling me; and she will sell me. I am afraid that she will deliver me, inexperienced as I am, to some stranger who will hurt me. So I am going to give myself to you. . . .” And she threw her arms about my neck. . . . I succumbed, and was still in a state of astonished shame when the aunt appeared. We reached Lucy-le-Bois together.

The two women did not leave me as at Cussy, but came into the little Inn where I stopped. I ordered fresh eggs and wine, and we breakfasted gaily. The niece was as fond and gentle with me as a bride on the morrow of her wedding. “You little matron of Ephesus,” I thought. “You have forgotten your first lover already!” She questioned me about my native place and family, as though she would have liked me to take her home. This showed that she was honest; for she was ruined if she stayed with her escort. . . . The aunt wanted a nap, so, while she sprawled upon a bed, *Yonne Bellecour* and I talked together. Yonne told me frankly what she wanted, but I made her see the impossibility of taking her to a village so near to mine, in my position of a young man dependent on his parents. I pointed out that her so-called aunt would make a terrible fuss if she left her without warning, and a still worse one if she was told beforehand. Yonne admitted that I was right, and said she would protect herself as best she could. For my part, I promised to join her at Auxerre, if she could arrange to stay there for a week. Then, reflecting that if the aunt woke up she would be surprised to hear us whispering, I began to relate my adventure with *Lydie* and *Clairette Valsuzon*, fondling Yonne the while, in expectation of those favours for which the expressive gestures of the young Lyonnaise had re-aroused desire. Here is the tale, which I purposely did not introduce in its proper place: "Were I free, my fair one, I would ask you in marriage; for you are pretty enough, and I like you well enough for that. But my mother married me secretly to a Mlle Sallins, a girl of whom she is very fond; she is much less pretty than you; and, as you are going to hear, my dear Yonne, you are not the only attractive girl whom I have been forced to give up on account of a marriage made to please my mother. At Dijon, whence I have come, a friend introduced me to two sisters who were his neighbours, with the idea that I should marry one or the other of them. They were the daughters of a well-to-do hairdresser. I visited them merely to amuse myself, but the elder daughter, Lydie, was charming, and I fell in love with her. I had begged my friend to say nothing about my family, so that I should not be humiliated if my attentions were rejected; and he left me free to say what I liked. I knew that Lydie and Clairette had a cousin of about my age whom they had never seen. He was a thoroughly bad character, and the family greatly desired that he should mend his ways. I took the name of this vagabond, *Sandis*, and they believed that my friend was trying adroitly to bring about a reconciliation. So I was treated by the parents as though I were their nephew, Sandis Valsuzon, and their future son-in-law; for, as they had no son, they wanted to perpetuate their name through this nephew. I was welcomed even more kindly by the sisters, and during the four days that my good fortune lasted, they vied with each other to win my favour. I decided very quickly for the elder sister, Lydie, and Clairette took this very well: 'It is but just,' she said, 'because my sister is the elder.' As Lydie felt certain of being my wife, she was not unkind to me and, on the third day, I did to her . . . what I did to you an hour ago. . . . On the fourth day we were just beginning this pretty game again . . ." (and, after having made certain that the aunt was asleep, I began it again with the tender Yonne). . . . "As I was saying, my charming friend, we were just going to begin this pretty game, when Clairette came into the room with a letter in her hand. 'How is it that you are writing to us from Beziers, Monsieur, where you are lying ill, when, at the same time, you are here and very well? ' she said laughing. 'Do you not see,' said her elder sister, annoyed at the interruption, 'that his letter was delayed, and that we never had it?' 'That is what my father says,' answered Clairette. 'And he also says that my cousin talks much better than he writes. . . . He arrived four days ago instead of to-morrow, as he says in his letter. So much the better! . . .' Her penultimate remark gave me seriously to think. I crushed Lydie to me . . . (I did the same to Yonne), and thought it best to tell her everything; but, at the same time, I made the most of my passion for her, which had been so extreme and violent as to drive me, a man of honour, to such a deception, with the sole object of becoming in some sort intimate with her. 'It is you who are to blame,' I added. 'Whence comes it that you are so beautiful, so appealing?' In spite of this, I had reason to perceive that Lydie was fonder of her cousin Valsuzon than of her lover Monsieur Nicolas. She advised me to disappear, and never come to their house again until I had buried my wife; in which case I might court Clairette, who thought highly of me. I followed the first part of her advice, and left the house.

"Sandis Valsuzon arrived the next evening. He was still ill, and all his body was covered with the most repulsive leprosy. He made his cousins retch. They set about curing him; and complained bitterly of my conduct to Treisignies, who swore that he did not know that I was married. He gave me a good scolding! . . . I justified myself as best I could; but how could I go back to Lydie, I, the father of two charming daughters! . . . That is my story, Mademoiselle, and that is my position."

It will be seen that I combined my imaginary secret marriage with Mlle Sallins with my new plans concerning Omphale, Edmée-Colette and Hypsipyle.

I concluded by doing to Yonne what I had done to Lydie. I reiterated my promise to meet her in Auxerre in a few days, and paid the whole score in her presence; then I dried her tears and set out again. . . . To conclude this incident now, I met Yonne at Auxerre in the house of my cousins, the Mairats, whose address I had given her. She told me that, after my departure, the lads of Vassy, who had been incited against them, had come to attack them in Lucy-le-Bois, but the innkeeper had protected them, and they had stayed in his house until the following morning. They had reached Auxerre without misadventure; there, she had skilfully evaded the old woman, and, bundle in hand, asked her way to the Petite-Rue-Saint-Germain. A woman had taken her to the house, where my introduction secured her a welcome, and she had been kept there for five days. She did not know what had become of the old woman, but no doubt she had gone to Paris (of this I made certain from the passenger list of the boat). Since I was married, she had no choice now but to return to Lyons. . . . I commended this idea, and, with incredible stupidity, considering what I had confided to her and the way in which I had behaved, I persuaded her to go to Dijon, and gave her a letter to Mlle Omphale. We shall see how much this indiscretion contributed to my misfortunes; for Yonne was to stay at Dijon. But to return.

I reached home two hours after having left Yonne at Lucy-le-Bois, and, the next day, I mentioned Manette to my mother. I had given up this girl, but I used her to prepare the way for Omphale and the facts connected with her. I wanted to make the most of anything that might give a good impression of my astuteness and diligence; for considerable skill would be needed to prevent my parents from being scared by Omphale's curious position. I talked about MM. de Cœurderoi, and mentioned, nonchalantly, that I had been received by a young lady belonging to the same honourable family who also lived at Dijon. "Then why bother about your Manette Teinturier?" exclaimed my mother. "Because I want to tell you everything," I answered, and added a word about Lydie. My mother looked astonished; but, in no way disconcerted, I described my adventure with Yonne, making it somewhat nobler than it was. . . . "O my son, how strange you are!" cried my mother. "If you run after so many girls, you will end by missing all of them! For Mademoiselle de Cœurderoi I would willingly give up my plans for my little friend Sallins, but only for her." There our conversation ended, because I was afraid lest the strange relation between Omphale and myself would be regarded as a story fabricated to cover this young lady's wantonness; so I awaited a more favourable opportunity. This silence, combined with the fact that I had written to Manette, made my parents think that I was more attracted by her than by Omphale. I fell ill, and they thought it was of grief because Manette had not answered my letter; she came to see me during my illness, and her fond and tender ways confirmed their opinion. They left me alone, and said nothing about marriage, to which, indeed, the tertian fever brought on by my soaking between Dijon and Vitteaux opposed an insuperable obstacle. I apprised both Omphale and Manette of my illness; I wrote to the former to explain my delay, for fear lest she should think I had cooled towards her, and to Manette through a sort of instinct of decency: I would willingly have told her I was dead if it had been possible. My father thought I was carrying on a lively correspondence with Manette, because he imagined that all my letters were addressed to her; therefore he explained to me one day that he made no claim to oppose my views absolutely, but only wished to express his own feeling in the matter. I thanked him, but, not daring yet to tell the whole truth about Omphale, I only said that I proposed to imitate him in his obedience to the estimable Pierre, in so far as his commands concerned Mlle de Cœurderoi. In this way I hoped to persuade him to take up a definite position in favour of his mother's relative; but I showed so little enthusiasm that he opined that she must be very ugly, and thought it an act of indulgence to say no more about her. As for my mother, she so much wanted her dear Sallins for a daughter-in-law, that she was quite tepid about Omphale.

And what was Omphale doing at Dijon? She received my letters from Sacy before those which I had sent by Yonne, and was just going to answer the former when the girl arrived and gave her the latter. Omphale was amazed by Yonne's story, and decided not to write to me until she knew all there was to know. She even thought that my illness was a fiction, invented to gain time, although, in her heart she could not conceive that my marriage with Sallins was a fact. Unfortunately she discovered the truth too late. . . .

In the meanwhile my fever increased in violence. I took purges to reduce it, and this other curious remedy: a large handful of sage was boiled, allowed to cool, and boiled again in a quart of good wine, which was reduced to a pint by evaporation. I swallowed this beverage at the beginning of an attack, and the results were terrible. I sweated to the point of prostration, so that, when the attack had passed, I could not raise my head from my pillow without coming near to swooning. After I had had recourse to this drastic remedy, the fever sensibly diminished with each attack, and I began to grow better.

When I was at my worst, I received a letter from Dijon in answer to one of mine of the 19th of August. It was from Manette, and was dated the 6th of September, and all who read it marvelled at its ingenuousness. I remember one curious thing about it. Manon Duveau had taught Manette to draw, and below her signature, which was written in red (probably in her own blood), she had traced a burning heart, and under it were the following words: *"I send you my heart; this heart is mine no longer; it belongs more to you than to me."* Below this she added: *"I have kissed this letter, which you will be reading, a hundred times, and I read yours over and over again. Farewell."*

My illness made me careless, and this letter was seen by my parents. It confirmed them in their belief that I was violently in love with Manette, but was fighting against my passion. About eight days later another letter arrived and my parents, not doubting that it came from the same person, suppressed it, but were too delicate to open it. Thus everything turned against me. I was very much puzzled at receiving no answer from Omphale, for I had told her that I was only waiting for my health to improve before speaking to my father. I wrote a third time and, as I was not yet strong enough to take my letter myself to the post at Vermenton, I gave it to a villager; my father, certain that it was to Manette Teinturier, followed him, took possession of it, and put it away with the one he had intercepted, without looking at the address. My fourth letter met with the same fate. Then, remembering my confidences to Yonne, I felt certain that she must have repeated these inventions, and that Omphale had changed her opinion about me. I hastened to disabuse her and, in this fifth letter, described my whole adventure with Manette, lest she should hear about it from others to our mutual disadvantage. This important letter went the way of the two which had preceded it, and my grief was so intense that I resolved to carry out the plan which I had suggested to Marie Jehannin. I decided to turn priest, proposing to take this girl to live with me in spite of all that I knew about her, or, if this proved impossible, Yonne Bellecour. I interviewed the Grands-Vicaires of Condorcet, Bishop of Auxerre, and it was arranged that I should be given a benefice after eighteen months in the Seminary. . . . But my horror of the ecclesiastical estate proved too strong, and I put Dijon out of my mind.

When I was completely recovered the Abbé Thomas came to Sacy. I took advantage of his visit to write a letter to my eldest brother stating the facts concerning my marriage with Henriette Kircher, because some part of Séry's version of the matter had come round to him. I do not know if he kept this letter, but I expect that he did: we were given to the keeping of things in our family. The Curé of Courgis is still alive to-day, the 5th of

September, 1796 (19th Fructidor), and the Abbé Thomas died on the 12th of February, 1786. In February 1794 the Curé was driven out of his cure by the Robespierrists, and incarcerated in the Ursulines of Auxerre. But during his residence in the metropolis of the Department of Yonne, Deputy Maure happened upon his name in the list of prisoners, and exclaimed: "What, is virtue itself to be imprisoned!" And he had him set at liberty. Men of strict life always pass for virtuous; but the Curé of Courgis, albeit blinded by superstition, was genuinely so. I am told that he became gentle and tolerant in his old age, and I congratulate both him and those about him for this. The Robespierrists were right to dispossess the Curés: it was the only way to extirpate superstition, and Lanjuinais and the Convention committed an irreparable mistake when they handed back the churches to fanatics, whose insolence was then at its height. . . . The Curé of Courgis was the first priest in the Department of Yonne to accept the civil status of the clergy.

During my third visit to Auxerre, I saw the Grands-Vicaires again. They assured me, on the Bishop's behalf, that I should be given a position in the town as assistant priest directly I was ordained, and the best cure to fall vacant during the first six months of my priesthood. I do not know to what I owed this assiduity, unless it was due to the very letter which ruined me with M. de Caylus, addressed to the choir master of my old school. Or perhaps, with two brothers in the diocese who were pillars of Jansenism by the strictness of their lives, they wanted a third brother to set against them. But was I the right person to carry out such far-reaching plans? All I can say is that, when I left the Grand-Vicaire, I had practically made up my mind. And I may as well confess that if Marie Jehannin had remained faithful, that would have been the end of it and I should have entered the priesthood. This would have been my wish and my vocation, to live tranquilly with a pretty girl who loved me.

But while I was ruminating over the matter, I received a letter from Renaud, in which he spoke of Zoé . . . Zoé whom I had almost forgotten at Dijon. At once my decision was taken: I regarded it as a duty to attach myself to Zoé; she was my friend's widow and my wife by right, and if I had said about her what I invented for Yonne's benefit about Brigitte Sallins, I should not have lied. I left Sacy hurriedly, without telling either my father or my mother that I was going. I only confided in the Pastor Foudriat, who saw me taking the road towards Auxerre. He told my parents, who were not disturbed; for they preferred that I should return to Paris and there cure myself of my supposed passion for Manette.

I paid no visits in Auxerre, because, as I was entering this town so dear to me in former times, I heard that . . . Marianne Tangis was being carried to her grave. Hérissé's wife had died on hearing that I was still free. . . . "And I killed her!" I exclaimed. "I am fated to be unlucky!" And I always have been. . . . I stopped under the Saint-Gervais archway, and paid my tribute of tears to the memory of three women, *Marguerite*, *Madeleine* and *Colette*. I did not see my cousins, but I caught a glimpse of Mlle Meslot in the Rue Saint-Père; she no longer lived near the Porte du Pont now that she was married. I had dinner in an Inn and slept the night at Joigny, Colombe's native place. I heard that this sweet girl had married a retail draper of the *Rues des Prouvaires* and *Honoré* in Paris. . . . I was at Sens next day by dinner time, and there I found Gonnet. He was working for the successor of the printer whose place at one time I had hoped to take; and this awakened such painful memories, on account of Mme Parangon, that I did not feel I could see him again, and left next morning without saying good-bye to him. At Montereau I came across a poor lad from Ruelle, who was on his way from Lyons where he had been deserted by his comrades and left without a penny. He was in rags and had no shoes. He offered to carry my bundle, and I paid him for this. We met the mounted police and they wanted to arrest him, but I undertook his defence, and was allowed to keep him. The lad's conversation and his native place reminded me of the Cardinal de Richelieu; and I cursed the infamous Capuchin *Joseph* as the originator of Lettres de Cachet, though I was not then acquainted with the full horror of them. (They no longer exist to-day, the 7th of September, 1795, but we have had Robespierre's orders for arrest, which were much worse! . . .) The miseries which this poor boy had undergone made me shudder! He was a good lad and honest; poverty had not yet destroyed his integrity; but if he had been arrested prison life would have corrupted him, as it has so many others. . . . Alas, he was one of those creatures who seem destined to scorn and toil and suffering, and to be the plaything of their fellows.

When we reached Paris, I parted from my fellow traveller and took refuge with Bonne Sellier, as though in another home. I tidied myself, and went up to see Zoé, who was still lodging in the same house. I found her in bed. She uttered a cry of joy on seeing me: "My only friend!" I threw myself into her arms. . . . All other feelings were obliterated, and I remembered no one but Loiseau and Zoé, save that the latter reminded me of Zéphire and Mme Parangon, and these three women were to be inseparable in my thought henceforward. Zoé was cheered by the sight of me, and her nurse thought she was better. They insisted that I should go and rest, for I could do no more.

On rising next morning I went to see Zoé again. But my so long desired presence had renewed her grief for all that she had lost, and her strength was not equal to it. I had only come back to close her eyes. I lost her on the third day after my arrival. . . . I was her heir. . . . I do not think that I have ever suffered more acutely. . . . But there was nothing of despair in my sorrow; I had grown accustomed to grievous losses and was inured to them. . . . I restored all Zoé's property to her family. Never, dear Reader, have I lost all virtue. . . . I was at this time in the depths of poverty. At Sens I had only possessed twenty-seven livres, the price of a silver cup which had been given me by my brother Boujat, and which I had been obliged to sell there. . . .

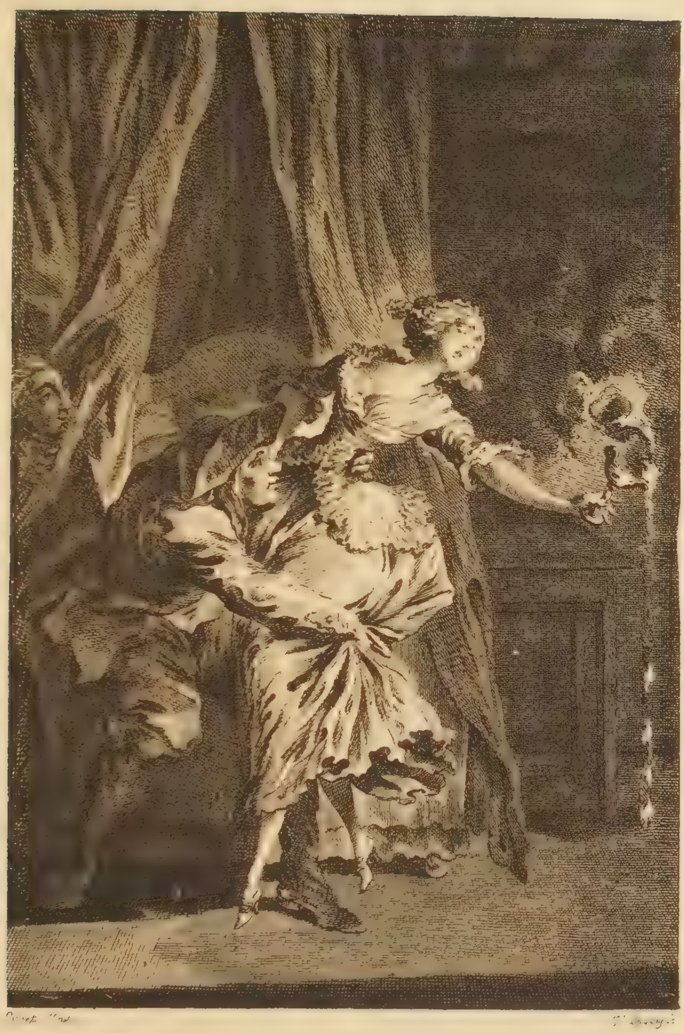
My three friends Renaud, Boudard and Gaudet had been told the news, and also Mme Deschamps, Sidonie Mentelle, Manon and Mme Werkawin. We all attended Zoé's funeral. Renaud commended me for restoring Zoé's property to her family, though Boudard and Gaudet seemed to think it a mistake. "Ah," exclaimed Renaud, "he was afraid lest festering hearts should curse our angelic friend. . . ." The four ladies agreed with him.

When they had returned each one to his business, I was left alone and without work; for there was little work at the time among the Paris printers, and, from the 16th of September, the day of my arrival, to the 3rd of November, all my friends' efforts were of no avail. . . . But I must depict my condition, during this short period, by extracts from my Note Books. I had nothing, and dared not confess this to anyone; my trust in friendship was buried in the grave with Loiseau. . . . That I suffered will be seen from the following note, dated the 22nd of September:

> *"Turbo meus permaximus! Non video unde mihi superveniet opus. Amicus unicus abest ille, qui alter ego semper mihi fuit! Sed equidem non audeo*

> *Losolidem lugere, nam lugere memetipsum solummodo viderer. . . . Paupertas laudanda, sed non egestas. . . . Periit Zoe, altera Losolis. Quid agam sine pecunia? sine opere? sine fama? sine credita fide, quæ me conducat ad mutuationem? Nihil habeo quo valeam, nec industriam, neque dotes scientiæ, aut animi. Et tamen sum homo, id est vir qui sentiat, videat, cogitet! . . . Philosophiane sufficiet, ubi omnia desunt? Si morior esurie, philosophiane sustentabit? Me servet ille Deus quem adoro, principium atque sator rerum!"*

On Saturday the 13th of October I called on my old master, Knapen, to see if any work had come in. I found Giraud the pressman there, an old friend of Loiseau's and mine, and as his wife and two daughters arrived just then with the dinner he asked me to join them. His two daughters, Edmée and Reine, were charming blondes. The eldest was eighteen and fully grown; Reine was four years younger. While we were dining, Giraud offered me the elder one to wife. Captivated as usual by what was nearest to me, I forgot Manette and my mother's plans concerning Brigitte Sallins, and, accepting his offer, began at once to call young Edmée "wife" and Giraud "father-in-law." Thus I had one day's amusement, but only one. I pointed out to Giraud that it was hardly the moment for me to marry when I had no work. "What does that matter?" he answered. "Work will come, son-in-law; and, in the meanwhile, you can stay with us. This last difficulty surmounted, he made me caress the girl, and I think would gladly have invited me to go to bed with her. After dinner, as I had nothing to do, Giraud told me to take Edmée for a walk so that we could make each other's acquaintance. Directly we were alone together, for Reine helped her mother to carry the crockery home, Edmée clasped my hand, weeping: "Ah, Monsieur Nicolas, have pity on me," she said. "I have heard about you for a long time, and I know that you are a terrible man, and that you violate girls when they will not listen to you; and



unfortunately my father wants you to insult me because I am in love with some one he does not like. But if you will promise not to marry me, I will do anything you wish." I was surprised by these words, the like of which had never been spoken to me, but I led pretty Edmée to a lonely place and put her to the proof. She yielded without any resistance, after having exacted a promise that I would not marry her or tell her father what had passed between us. . . . I took her home in the evening. "Well, how do we stand?" asked Giraud. I told him privately, as one friend to another, what I had done to his daughter, and what she had said to me. But I did not play her false; on the contrary, I pleaded her lover's cause. . . . Finally, to bring him to a favourable decision, I asked for his younger daughter instead, though she was only fourteen years old. Giraud was fond of me. "I will do what you want for two reasons," he answered. "Firstly because Londeau will be a cuckold by you, and secondly, and most important to me, because you have asked for my younger daughter and so will be my son-in-law in any case. So go ahead and win Reine's love, and shape her to your fancy; I give you complete freedom." "I accept!" I answered. "Reine is like my Zéphire, and also like a certain little Narcisse Dhall of Auxerre, whom I could have loved dearly!" Giraud was overjoyed. . . . This adventure might have led to something; it might even have been charming, had it not been for two potent obstacles: the memory of Omphale – Omphale, who was waiting for me, who had answered my letters, whose letters were never given to me by my father until after I had formed a bond which was fatal to my repose and to my happiness and destructive of my health; until after the consummation of my misfortune! . . . Was my terrible fate inevitable? . . . I believe so. A single change in the train of circumstances, the littlest change – one letter delivered – and my lot would have been different! But Parangon was destined to do it, and he did it. His wife would have given me a happy life, her husband willed the opposite; and death did not ravish him away in the moment of his infernal triumph! . . . What calamitous chance, what demon prevented my two friends, Renaud and Boudard (or even myself) from finding me work as a printer, work so easy to come by? If I were superstitious, I should believe that some evil genius had diverted every possibility of my remaining in Paris in order to drive me to Auxerre, where misery awaited me. . . .

I thought, however, that I was settled in Paris for always, thanks to Bonne Sellier's sincere affection for me. I will relate this touching adventure shortly. . . . In the meanwhile, I had plenty of time on my hands, now that Zoé was gone and Edmée Giraud had married Londeau. Bonne Sellier lent me a louis so that I could attend the latter's wedding; and Giraud seemed pleased to see me taking liberties with his younger daughter, and paying no attention to the other girls; indeed he looked to it that these were kept away from me. The result was that I enjoyed her in spite of her youth, and this led to an irreconcilable quarrel with her elder sister; perhaps the latter was jealous, or it may have been her piety, seeing that the fact of my having two sisters seemed to pain her deeply. . . . But this would not have alienated me from Reine Giraud: it was a combination of circumstances, apparently fortunate but disastrous in the event, which made trouble between me and Giraud, and stole away my last refuge against M. Parangon.

Next day my mind was turned to Auxerre by a letter from Rose Lambelin. I was amazed by this letter, in which Mlle Rose asked me in so many words *whether I meant to marry her!* She added that *some one else was courting her, but that she would prefer to have me if I was thinking of keeping my* *promise to her. . . .* As we know, there was now nothing in the way of it, and I had a passing wish to see Auxerre again. So I answered her letter, and heard, during the same week, that Michelle Gueneau had married a man of Bazarne. I had liked her better than Mlle Sallins, so I gave up all idea of marriage in that quarter, although Michelle had a sister called *Gabrielle.* I settled down quietly to investigate my landlord Sellier's books, and found, among others, *Les Illustres Françaises*, on which Collé later based his play *Dupuis and Desrônais*; *l'Histoire de Julien*, by the Abbé de la Bletterie; and *la Morale d'Épicure* by the Abbé le Batteux. These books engaged my interest and fed my mind, and my imagination fell again under the forgotten charm of the romantic. Bonne Sellier, with all her peculiarities, had a thousand virtues; undismayed by my poverty, the generous woman chose this moment to introduce me to the wife she had already promised me and who equalled in merit, beauty and fortune all those whom I had lost. You will be astonished, Reader, how, with so many means of salvation, a fatality or my own heedlessness plunged me in misfortune! . . .

Bonne had a sister-in-law called *Sophronie-Françoise Sellier*, who was a wardrobe dealer in a good way of business. "When you left us to go home," Bonne said to me, "I mentioned a certain girl to you. She is fairly well to do and owns a good enough business to make it unnecessary for you to slave." She then mentioned her sister-in-law and told me what she did. I imagined this Mlle Sellier as a hawker of old hats, and treated the proposal as a jest. Bonne Sellier, who was quick-witted enough in spite of her simplicity, smiled and resolved to make me repent of my disdain. She pretended not to notice my jesting tone, and whispered: "Listen! She is coming here on Sunday at four o'clock. Everyone will be out and we can discuss the position undisturbed." I agreed to be present, intending, nevertheless, not to waste much time on the two women.

When Sunday came I felt no great eagerness to see Mlle Sophronie-Françoise, and would have been with Reine Giraud at half-past three if I had had enough money to pay for a meal. I was resigning myself as best I could, when I heard the outer door open and some one cross the little ante-chamber to go into Bonne's room. I heard talking, and approached the door. A sweet, melodious voice fell upon my ear! . . . I put my head round the door . . . and I saw . . . a Beauty! . . . I was not surprised, because I assumed that Mlle Sellier had not yet arrived. But just as I was thinking this, I heard Bonne saying: "He is at home, sister. I will go and tell him." I hurriedly sat down again at my table, and pretended to be reading *Les Illustres Françaises*. "My sister is here," said Bonne. "Come." I followed her, tidying myself, and just as I was about to enter the room I heard Bonne say: "He thinks you are a hawker of old hats, and yet he is smoothing his hair and making himself beautiful, so he wants to appear attractive." Sophronie blushed when I entered, and, as her skin was naturally white, this made her look ravishing. My heart quickened at the sight of so pretty a person. . . . I greeted her easily: "This is not the first time I have seen you, Mademoiselle." "You have seen my sister?" "Certainly! And I knew, before I came in, that she was the most amiable person in the world." "I have told her about you, Monsieur Nicolas; about your ill-recompensed ability and your excellent family; and as you find my sister attractive . . ." "But that is not enough . . ." "I can see in her eyes that she likes you. . . . If I could unite the two of you, I should think myself the luckiest woman in the world. . . ." Sophronie blushed to her eyes, and looked the more beautiful for it. It was the 23rd of October; everything was arranged with a speed that amazed and delighted me. Sophronie told me *that it had been her wish to marry for a long time*; *but that, as she was the daughter of a master printer of Soissons, she had wanted to find someone whose family assorted with hers. From what her sister had said about me at different times, she had gathered that I would suit her*; *and more, that she would find in me something better than she had ever hoped for.* . . . (Here she glanced smilingly at her sister-in-law.) She added *that she was in a good way of business, and enjoyed the confidence of some of the best jewellers of the Rue Saint-Honoré, the Palais, the Quai de Gèvres, and the Quai de l'Horloge*; *in consequence of which she was able to conduct sales without risking any of her own money. Also she had an invested capital to the value of two thousand four hundred livres, besides two thousand crowns in cash, and plenishings which were worth a considerable sum.* . . . I listened with a twofold interest, in her beauty and in her fortune. I felt that an immense weight of poverty was being lifted from my shoulders. Consequently I showed the liveliest gratitude to Bonne Sellier, and protested to Sophronie that I felt it in my heart to cherish her as so charming a person should be cherished; as I should have cherished Zéphire or Zoé. Bonne's joy was indescribable, and this touched me so much that I took her on my knees together with Sophronie, and divided my caresses equally between them. It was like one of my old and happy days. . . . We talked until seven o'clock, when Mlle Sophronie left so as not to be seen by my fellow-boarders. I escorted her home and was admitted to her apartment, which was richly furnished for a person in her position; the furniture must have been worth at least twelve thousand francs. . . . So now once again, like another Tantalus, the cup of fortune was raised to my lips. . . . Sophronie told me that she had frequently seen me at her sister-in-law's house in the old days and twice since my recent return, and that she had often wanted to fix my attention upon herself; only, until this last occasion, her sister had told her that her rivals were too powerful. "But a few days ago she said to me: 'Now is the time. There is no one in the running, as far as I can see, except a little girl of fourteen. You must meet him.' " In the conversation which followed it became clear to me that Sophronie had heard my whole story from Zoé, who had been Bonne's neighbour; and that my present position had at last emboldened her to offer me her property and person. I answered in such a way as to convince her that she had had no reason to be bashful. Indeed she attracted me intensely, and my ardent caresses were proof of this. "Ah," she said, "I liked you on sight; but to know you is to love you."

I left enchanted with her. "My good luck has come back," I thought, "and this time I shall hold on to it and not let it slip through my fingers!" On my return Bonne saw that my mind was made up and that I was deeply attracted; and intense as was my joy, it was quite surpassed by hers, for she had the best heart of any woman that ever lived. . . .

As I had nothing to do next morning I went to see Sophronie, and found her on the point of going out. She gave me breakfast, and then I offered her my arm and we went out together. We visited her jewellers. Mlle Sellier called me "brother," for the sake of propriety, and my honest bashful looks squared with her excellent reputation; so that she was assured that, on my appearance alone, the jewellers would have as much confidence in me as in herself. Overjoyed, Sophronie said to me: "My plans are growing; I see that you will be able to help me, and fortune will smile upon us. . . ." We took our goods to various mansions, amongst others to that of Mlle Arnould of the Opera; and everywhere we went I saw how much Sophronie was trusted and respected for her integrity.

On our return, Mlle Sellier said to me: "You are going to have dinner with me and, if it will not weary you, we will make another round this afternoon. But, in a few days, I shall have to announce that you are my betrothed, for I have a brother who is a thoroughly bad character, that Laurent whom you have seen at Madame Sellier's; and if he hears that people trust my brother, he will take advantage of this to ask for goods in my name from those shopkeepers who have not yet seen you." I did in fact know this Laurent Sellier; he had been an intimate friend of Mollet the Mandrinist. . . . We made another round in the afternoon, ending up at the house of her sister, Bonne, who was enchanted to hear what we had been doing together. "Why, you are quite like husband and wife already!" she said. "And if you took my advice, you would sleep behind the same door, on account of Laurent; for he wants to possess his sister, rob her and give her to his profligate friends." Sophronie blushed, but refused. I escorted her home again, and we were very happy together during our little supper; Sophronie had a charm which went straight to my heart. I pleaded, half jestingly, to stay with her. "No," she said, "because if anyone came to know about it, it would delay our marriage. We must not live under the same roof. But to show you that it is not through coldness . . ." and she kissed me. I would not let her off so cheaply, but overwhelmed her with all the impetuosity of my temperament, and the rose, which she had guarded up to the age of thirty, was plucked by Love holding Hymen by the hand. "Go," she said, pressing my lips to her pretty mouth, "and do not let me have to wait for my husband to-morrow!" I seized a trophy from my victory. "What are you doing?" she asked. "I am going to show this to Bonne. . . ." She blushed, but made no objection. Bonne marvelled! "I knew she still had it, although her work is dangerous enough for a pretty girl like her. But I am very pleased that you have proved it."

Next day I got up at six o'clock and was with Sophronie by seven. I found her ready dressed. "While I am getting breakfast ready," she said, "write to your parents and tell them the reasons which have decided you to marry me." "That I cannot do, seeing that fondest love is my motive and I must write of other things." She rewarded my lips for this pretty compliment (as she called it) and, after an expressive silence, added: "We must not delay: that bad man came again last night, and he will not desist from his attempts upon me until I am married." So I sat down and wrote at her desk; Sophronie sealed the letter and kept it so as to put it in the post herself. . . . We took a different round this time, as the same people do not buy jewels every day. Also we visited some Jews, and they entrusted Sophronie, who was under the protection of the Lieutenant of Police, with various articles of value, which had been pawned and not redeemed, for her to demand their redemption. Clearly Sophronie's business covered a wide field. . . . We dined, and stayed at home together for the afternoon, and I was made the happiest of men with many favours seasoned by fond tenderness. I could see that Sophronie, who had loved me hopelessly ever since Zéphire's days, had a genuine passion for me, and I felt that I could love her both as a son and as a lover, and that I should pass sweet days in her society. . . . We had supper together, and I nearly won her consent to my spending the night in a little room which had a bed in it, on the condition, which I accepted, that I was locked in there. For Sophronie, although she had given herself to me, held it improper to sleep with anyone except her husband; and this feeling – or rather her destiny – led her to change her mind just as she was preparing to keep me, for fear lest I should persuade her to give what she did not want to give; and I left the house.

Next morning I hurried to my betrothed. The whole household was afoot, and directly I arrived I was seized by the collar and called a thief, an assassin and a seducer! . . . I asked to be taken to Mlle Sophronie Sellier. She was dying. She cleared me of all complicity and spoke fond words to me . . . but she died. . . . Her sister-in-law, my landlady, who had been sent for, appeared a moment later. She said that she knew only too well who was the real culprit. . . . We heard afterwards from a neighbour, for Sophronie could scarcely speak, that a bandit, calling himself her brother, had come during the night with five or six other men, all drunk. They had managed to open the outer door with a skeleton key, as Sophronie had forgotten to draw the bolts as was her practice; then they broke in the feeble lobby door, and, having gagged Mlle Sellier, violated her, stole everything they could find, and murdered her for fear lest she would betray them; and only left her when, seeing that she was unconscious to their insults, they thought her dead. . . . We were in despair, yet we had hopes of saving her life. She would neither mention the criminal's name to the Commissary, nor even admit the crimes that had been committed upon her person. . . . The surgeon we had sent for was horrified; and, after examining the patient, told Bonne that her sister had only a few hours to live. We lost her at three o'clock that afternoon. . . . Her apartment was stripped, and her investments, to the value of two thousand four hundred livres, were sold to pay for the jewels which had been entrusted to her and which had been stolen. The letter which I had written the day before was found in her pocket, and this, with the alibi I was able to prove, saved me from being suspected of complicity.

My happy dream had only lasted three and a half days, and I found myself once more in the depths of poverty, with no resource save in the kindness of my landlady. Indeed it seemed to me that I had fallen lower, in proportion to the height of the fortune I had so nearly grasped. For to one in my position Sophronie would have been a treasure – not that I had intended to become myself a dealer, that would have been unsuitable to my mind and character; but carefree with an intelligent wife, I had planned to devote myself to study and to adopt some honourable profession. My dream vanished with Sophronie's loss, and she herself seemed but a dream a few days after. Ah, if only some good angel had revealed my situation to Mlle Omphale and she had written to me in Paris, my lot would have been otherwise! Why did I not write to her again? What paralysed my hand? The fate that willed me to become what I have become: otherwise my life would have been happier, but it would have been less extraordinary, less singular! I should have been delivered from printing and a journeyman's work by means less painful and less strange. We shall see what these means were after six years of utter death have passed; how a gleam of light aroused me, a new despair stiffened my courage.

It still saddens me to think of the state of deadness into which I now fell. How I mourned for Marianne Tangis! How I regretted Colombe! . . . But I never gave a thought to either Manette or Mlle Sallins. Rose's letter turned my mind for a moment towards Auxerre, and I despatched my answer to her. But what fatality led me to give my letter to the clerk Durand instead of putting it in the post? Durand left it with M. Parangon and it reminded him of my existence. At the same time I wrote to M. Foudriat the Curé. When I began my letter I had meant to request him to ask my father to send me some money; but as I was writing, the thought that a man of my age, and one who had been contemplating marriage, could not even support himself so humiliated me that I gave the Pastor quite a different impression from the one I had intended. His answer dealt mainly with Rose Lambelin who, on her way to Avallon on business, had passed through Sacy and called upon him to ask news of me, but without mentioning her name. This girl was not without attractions, and the Pastor spoke of her as though she were a very seductive coquette! He praised especially *her little slippers and the elegance of her travelling costume*. . . . This letter almost tempted me to renew my courtship of Rose.

Who would believe that, in the midst of such poverty, I had yet another adventure, which fortunately did not require money? It was with Thérèse. She was not dismayed by my poverty; on the contrary, she hoped to persuade me to marry her, and said as much when offering me, in the kindest manner, a sum of money, which, however, I would not accept. . . . Almost at the same time Zéphire's mother, to whom I had confided my position, made me a most extraordinary proposal: she also offered to marry me, on the understanding that she left me absolutely free, and that she kept a girl of fifteen in the house, who should belong to me only and whom she would feed and dress. She promised to invest the earnings of her infamous trade in my name, and to give me twelve hundred francs besides for my little pleasures (this woman kept two closed houses and they brought in a handsome income); in a word, she tempted me in every possible way. I was deeply mortified that poverty should expose me to such offers; but, one night, when I could not sleep for worry, I was conscious of a temptation to accept Nanette's proposals, and this so frightened me that, next morning, I resolved to leave Paris. I had only twenty-four sous. No matter! I started out along the road to Rouen; but I got no further than the Porte de Versailles and was back again the same evening, because I could not bring myself to beg my way. I repented of not having called on Mme Ponsardin, who would have advanced the money for my journey, and firmly resolved to do so next morning. . . . But as I entered Bonne's house, I received an unexpected letter! . . . It was from M. Parangon! . . .

Apparently my letters to Rose and to M. Foudriat, which, no doubt, he read, had reminded him of me; and they gave him an excuse for asking his Tartar Tourangeot for news of me. Tourangeot called on Bonne, who told him my latest misfortune, but, for the rest, gave a wholly favourable report of me. He would have had nothing unsatisfactory to tell his former master about me, had he not met Thérèse on his way downstairs. This girl was not hostile to me, but she was nettled because Bonne would not support her plan of marrying me; and, with no ill intent, she depicted my position in all its misery. Tourangeot dictated his answer according to her information, and Parangon rejoiced! "Now is the time," he said to himself, "to complete his degradation. . . ." There was a girl living in Auxerre at the time, who was a schemer and a secret wanton. . . . It was upon this dishonoured creature that Parangon cast his eye; it was for her he destined me. In pursuance of this plan, he wrote offering me a position as foreman, as Bourgoin had just left him to take over a stationery business at Clamecy. I accepted, because I realised the dangers that I ran in Paris; and yet these dangers were less terrible than those I was to meet in the town that had been so dear to me! . . . I thought of writing to Gaudet d'Arras whom I had forgotten for so long, but I had lost his address. I flattered myself that I should easily procure it in Auxerre. How wrong I was! Parangon had already intercepted several letters from my friend, expressly that he should think me ungrateful and weary of me. It is true that Loiseau had done the same thing on one occasion, when Gaudet d'Arras posted me his *Soap*

Bubbles, a satire in the manner of Juvenal. He thought it would be dangerous to me, and I only found it long afterwards among Boudard's papers. And what does that signify? That love and hate alike were to contribute to my ruin. . . . I never found out Gaudet d'Arras's address at Auxerre; Mme Bourgoin herself gave me a false one. . . . I had no money for the journey, so I borrowed fifty francs from my sister Margot, and secretly sold some of my shirts to pay Bonne, though she did not want to take anything. I went to a second-hand clothes dealer in the *Rue de Versailles-Saint-Victor*, and thereby became acquainted with this cursed brood. The first dealer offered me twelve francs for four shirts which were worth at least forty-eight, and for which I was asking twenty-four. This woman left me, and another took her place who offered me nine francs for the lot. I protested. Then a third offered me six, and I was finally obliged to part with them for seven. Then the three wretches proceeded to share the spoil. A man is beside himself after some time passed in want; I am not astonished that he becomes wicked, even atrociously so; that he turns thief and murderer; it is the contrary that amazes me. I would gladly have destroyed these three wretches if I could have done so with impunity.

I left Paris on the 7th of November, 1759, with about nine francs in my pocket. Money had been given me that morning for the journey, as is the custom when an employer sends for a workman, but, in Richecœur's presence, I left all that I owed to Bonne in one of the drawers. My passage was six francs fifteen sous; the rest paid for my food, which on the Auxerre boat only cost me six sous a day: a bowl of bean soup in the morning and another in the evening, at three sous a bowl. I reached Auxerre on the 10th. I did not go to see my cousins, as I wanted to conceal my presence in Auxerre from my family for a little while. I took a room at Chavagny's cook-shop, where Chambon the clock-maker, previously my fellow boarder in the Rue des Poulies, also lodged. Chavagny was Sophie's father, and my idea was to fall in love with her and win her for a wife. Could I have escaped my destiny by remaining here? I do not think so; for the very next morning the vile and greedy Rüttot, bribed by the atrocious Parangon, suggested that I should come to his house. I accepted against my better judgment, for the sake of peace and quiet, and because it was my fate. . . . For we shall soon understand Parangon's motive in inducing me to board with a low fellow devoted to his interests. Everything combined to bring about my ruin.

It will be remembered that Loiseau had been Maîne Lebègue's lover. We used to talk about her sometimes in Paris, and one day, when he had been dilating upon the virtues of his mistress, he said to me: "She has a cousin who seems a girl of rare merit, Mademoiselle Agnès Lebègue, the apothecary's daughter." These calamitous words remained in my memory, and favoured M. Parangon's plans. . . . I was only too pleased not to have my meals with M. Parangon, as other foremen had, for we were too odious to each other to enjoy a daily meeting amidst the intimacies of the table. But Parangon had two other reasons for excusing me: the first, that I should become acquainted with the disgraced Agnès, a distant cousin of his and his drab, as well as that of seven or eight other men: *Guillaume, Turpin, Chacheré, Motré the rich, Désœuvres* the attorney, *Leroi* the clerk, *Lescovan, Destianges*, two excise officers, etc.* And nothing was easier, as the glutton Rüttot was the recognised lover of the elder Lebègue, who liked bed and bottle equally. . . . Parangon's second motive for having me as an employee without admitting me to his table was to lower and degrade the man who had so nearly risen to be his equal, and yet put a stop to certain rumours that were abroad concerning my intimacy with his wife; so that people should say: *If that had been true, he would never have taken him back.* . . . I did not suspect the satisfaction I was giving him; I only came to know of it after we had done with each other for ever. . . . My parents were pleased to have me near to them again, and commended my seeming reconciliation with M. Parangon, as it gave the lie to those same rumours which had wounded their delicate sensibilities. My father, however, knew the truth of these from Mme Parangon's own lips. My dear parents were determined that I should marry. They had just lost two of their sons: Baptiste, who came next to me and who had been sent to M. Beaucousin, my sister Marie's husband, and Charles, next below him, who had died when serving with an Auvergne regiment in this year of 1759. Charles had been a most promising young man. He had left the notary, with whom he had been working, to enlist; not for the sake of licence or even for love of glory, but, on the contrary, for love of his country and the public good. Filled with enthusiasm by the public announcements, he longed to defend his country against the enemies of the State, and his patriotic addresses on the *Quai de la Ferraille* gained five or six lads a day for the army. He was given an officer's uniform; and with this and his charming face he was able to influence the young men of his own age.

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*The lists of lovers which Restif was pleased to attribute to his wife are not taken seriously by his biographers, and they do not accord with the high esteem in which she was held by all who knew her, including Restif's own friends and family. He seems to have taken for granted that she needed the same "consolations" which he himself found so easily and so copiously. [Ed.]

I was near to escaping my calamitous fate in more than one way. I wrote to Giraud, inviting him to come and work at Auxerre and bring his younger daughter. He consented; but M. Parangon suppressed his letter and engaged instead that *Guillaume* who afterwards became a bookseller at the corner of the *Rue de Hurepoix.* I concluded that Giraud was still annoyed with me for deserting Reine for Sophronie. . . . Then my thoughts turned to Rose, and I accepted an invitation to meet her. We shall see the result of this. Out of conceit with Rose, I would have liked to love Sophie Chavagny, but she already had a lover. Finally I overcame my aversion for Mlle Sallins, and my mother hurried to Vermenton overjoyed, to find that she had just been contracted to an amiable and well-to-do young man of Sainte Pallaye. . . . But if, on my first visit to my parents after returning to Auxerre, I had been shown those letters from Omphale which they were still keeping, I should have been even more surely saved. I should have escaped Parangon and his scheming cousin; I should have been for ever happy, and through Mlle Omphale, through Colette! But they thought it their duty to postpone giving them to me.

At first M. Parangon seemed very pleased with my energy. This had grown with poverty, which also, by diminishing my spirit, had made me more pliant, so that my tyrant was amazed at my ready complacence. *When Jupiter reduces a man to slavery, he deprives him of half his virtue,* as Homer says. Parangon knew this perfectly well, and based his hopes for the success of his plans thereon. How this ruthless enemy must have enjoyed seeing that same young man of whom he had been doubly jealous forced to crawl to him! For he could easily see that, with my energy, I should have left him far behind had I got the business at Sens. . . . Such was my position when, about the 27th November, I found two guests at supper with my host, Rüttot: a mother and her daughter, who were introduced to me as Mme and Mlle Lebègue. Immediately I remembered Loiseau's remark, and I locked my own chains! (We know how much I respected Loiseau and his oracles!) It was those . . . fatal . . . words of my one true friend, and not

Parangon's cunning, that caused my ruin; they lent charm and merit to ugly Agnès. In addition to this there was my friendship with Maîne, her cousin, that close friendship which I have described; I was interested in anyone connected with her who had loved Loiseau. René Lebègue, a witty and generally esteemed man despite his love of wine, was away at this time, as his childhood's friend, Doctor Poissonnier the elder, had procured him a place as apothecary-Major to the Army on the Lower Rhine. Her father's merit, position and estate had some weight with me; but my friend's praise of Agnès Lebègue was the determining factor; this was the foundation, this the cement of my fatal bond. . . . (Oh, what anguish, Loiseau! Who could have supposed that you would help our common enemy, Parangon, against your dear Nicolas? . . . But, alive, you would never have done so; and it is not to your charge that I lay this crime in the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis. . . .*) My latest fancy was unlike any I had had before; I was impelled, as it were, despite myself. Rüttot's wife, well taught by the detestable Parangon, gave me the most excellent report of Mme and Mlle Lebègue; and this I took as confirmation of my friend's eulogy. . . . Thus it was with a quiet mind, and not troubled as when I was in love with her, that I saw Rose again.

I had neglected to call on Rose since my return, and she chose, through an apprentice, to give me an assignation near the Benedictines; that is to say, in the same place where she had failed me for the second time in the old days. She came alone. I was astonished to feel no impatience while waiting for her, and concluded that my nature must have changed. We crossed the Faubourg Saint-Martin and went on into the country. The spell was broken! Rose was no longer a young divinity who transformed Nature into fairyland; she was a tall plain woman, who seemed common enough in manner and appearance compared with the women I had known in Paris. It was very cold, but my heart was colder than the air. I pretended to address her in the same strain as four years previously, but she was too intelligent to be deceived. Seeing that I was trying to warm myself by stamping on the ground, she looked me straight in the face, and said: "You do not love me any more!" (And her words found echo in the bottom of my heart.) She got up at once. "It is very cold here," she said. "Let us go back." We talked of indifferent matters on the way home. I took her to her door (for she was no longer afraid of gossip), and she said: "Will you come in?" "No," I answered. "Your parents should have warning of my visit. . . ." I withdrew at once and have never spoken to her again in my life. . . . To conclude with Rose. She was very angry directly she found out that I was meeting Agnès Lebègue, and wrote anonymous letters to my father and to my brothers at Courgis against her. She was right no doubt, but her letters had little effect; anonymity indicates no good intention and people distrust an enemy who masks his features and takes refuge in obscurity. . . . She married about six months after myself, ruined a husband she could not endure, and forced him to go to Paris, there to use his talents and the influence of her cousin, the actress *Deschamps* or Mme *Bérard*, to make money. (Herein she imitated Agnès Lebègue who, as we shall see later, had made me do the same, on the pretext of soliciting the patronage of the Drs. Poissonnier.) Rose died in the Capital in 1764 or 5, ten years after we had first met, at the same age as Mme Parangon, twenty-seven. . . . I saw her twice in Paris, but did not speak to her. . . . Such was the end of Rose Lambelin, whose caustic wit, and inclination to make all around her suffer so as to enjoy the irritation of her victims, brought unhappiness upon herself.

Parangon had been told about my meeting with this girl, and trembled for his vengeance. He bribed the apprentice to deliver all Rose's sweet or bitter notes to him instead of to me. Thus I could not answer them. She was infuriated. . . . Yet she served Parangon's ends by writing in every direction against Agnès Lebègue: he wanted me to marry his cousin, but he wanted me to marry her dishonoured. He instructed Mme Lebègue to redouble her efforts to catch me. . . . We shall see the methods she made use of. La Rüttot, on her side, was unremitting in her praise, thus satisfying her own jealousy as well as serving Parangon; for she thought Agnès was her husband's drab. I fell head foremost into every trap they laid, blinded by Loiseau's dictum. In the end Parangon found out how I had been caught, and it added a new relish to his vengeance. . . . For my part, after I had finally broken with Rose, I threw myself whole-heartedly into my plan for marrying Agnès; and directly I showed whither my thoughts were tending, Mme Lebègue consulted Parangon and was instructed, in accordance with his designs and knowledge of my character, how to trap me through my senses. The woman was as clever, cunning and malicious as Rose, and she attacked the business so astutely, ensnaring me with half favours, and adroitly pledging my parents to expenses on behalf of her daughter, that when Parangon, who had directed the whole affair, struck his terrible blow at my honour through Rüttot, I could not free myself. The details are painful to me, but if I am to be useful through my honesty, not one of them must be omitted.

Mme and Mlle Lebègue were given a bad supper by the Rüttots once a fortnight; but Rüttot was feasted every Sunday by the immoral and licentious Mme Lebègue. It cannot have been his wit that amused *Agnès Couillard*, for of that he had absolutely none; but he was a handsome man.

The first time I met the ladies at this melancholy repast Rüttot, well trained by Parangon, asked me to join him in escorting them home. I was well pleased to give my arm to the young lady, as I wanted some private conversation with her in order to verify what Loiseau had said. She displayed a very commonplace mind; but I liked better to imagine that she was not exerting herself than to believe that Loiseau had been mistaken. Rüttot did not take me with him on the following Sunday, but his wife told me where he was, and next day he inveigled me into asking for an invitation by saying that they had talked a lot about me. All this was a pre-arranged plan. Rüttot, through remorse or shame, did not press the invitation; but, with his first word, I accepted. I found out later that Parangon paid for the feast, at which the wine was excellent. After my introduction to the ladies' house, through this admirably balanced supper party of four, I visited them nearly every evening. Loiseau's fatal words echoed continually in my ears and made me invite seduction. . . . O Gaudet d'Arras, why had I not the help of your knowledge and your friendship! But Parangon intercepted all your letters! . . . And you, Omphale! Omphale! . . . Alas, you made confidential enquiries, and the execrable Parangon saw to it that the story of my supposed marriage with Brigitte Sallins was confirmed! . . . But why did I not fly to you as I was tempted to? What stopped me? My unhappy fate. Ah, had I but known that vile Rüttot, guided by the vindictive Parangon, was hurling me into the arms of a hyena who prostituted her already withered charms to their ends! . . . But surrounded as I was by these two men and their women (for that Marianne Geollin, whom I mentioned when she was Mme Linard's chambermaid, was now Parangon's servant and mistress), I did not know how Agnès was behaving at the time, nor why people had inveighed against her in the previous summer. An infamous league was banded against me; and ignoble creatures actually did those things to me which, fifteen years later, I attributed to more exalted persons in the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis*. By comparing that work, written in 1775, with this one, the Reader will see how one writes a novel, and how records history. The two books have the same foundation, but, when I wrote the first, events were more recent and nearly all the characters concerned were still alive, so that some disguise was necessary. Now they are nearly all dead, and both my plan and my aim compel me to tell the truth. Therefore it is as an historian that I write to-day.

As I have said, pleasure was the bait used to lure me. Agnès Couillard, my future mother-in-law, had not been without beauty, and she had kept her fine breasts and some other traces of past charms; such were the materials she used to second Parangon and rid herself of a dishonoured daughter. I knew nothing of what was going on; absorbed in my work, I saw no one but the people who were interested in deceiving me. I spoke three or four times to the demoiselles Baron, but they were Agnès's cousins; also they may not have heard at the time that I was courting her. Doubtless the voluptuous Agnès Couillard found my unassuming ways agreeable. I was less of an automaton than some of the lovers who came in search of her daughter, and less of a coxcomb than others. A fund of vanity led her to believe that she was still a better woman than her daughter, and convinced her that she could more successfully knot the bonds which were to hold me captive. So she took possession of me every evening. She talked well, and sang better; and, while she held me in her arms upon her lap, my face cushioned upon her skilfully raised breasts and one rose bud pressed between my lips, she would sing tender, expressive words; or relate the ways in which her husband, a man of delicate sensibilities, had adored her in the early days of their marriage, depicting her charms and the transports they had excited in him. And as she was not deficient in wit, these tales were interesting as told by her. Often her daughter would enhance the charm of my position by taking her place behind me and pressing one of my hands to her soft lips, with delicate lingual titillations which gave me a voluptuous thrill; or she would go further and double the effect by putting one of my fingers in her mouth and sucking it. It was as though Mme Lebègue said to herself: "You are greedy for libidinous sensations, voluptuous satisfaction is what you want? Very well, then; but essential favours surfeit one with the giver; therefore I shall prelude, and prelude most deliciously; and if you want anything more before marriage, it will be I who give it you; if you are surfeited, it will not be with my daughter." I think she reasoned thus, but there was another motive for her conduct. Lecherous as never woman was lecherous before, she wanted first to enjoy all the sweets of love, even though this was inspired by another. . . . If these two women had agreed to give me a twofold pleasure, they chose the very best way to master me through the senses. And they mastered me.

Gradually a factitious taste was born of use, and I felt a daily need for the pleasures which Agnès and her mother gave me; and, despite my experience, I mistook this factitious taste for love. . . . It is a mistake too often made by young people and wise parents should be on their guard against it, in order to save their children from disgust and from regrets. Agnès gave me pleasure, therefore our union would be delightful. . . . False reasoning! Respect could have made it delightful; but sensual pleasure is a harlot and a deceiver.

Captivated as I was by mother and daughter, and urged by La Rüttot (acting on Parangon's instructions), I wrote to my parents, saying *that I had found a suitable match in Auxerre*; *that M. Parangon strongly approved of my courtship, as the lady was his cousin*; *that there was a little money in the family, the remains of a more considerable property*; *and that the young lady was intelligent and industrious, and had been held in high esteem by my friend M. Loiseau.* In a word I left out nothing that could bring them to a favourable decision. They answered that they trusted to M. Parangon's wisdom. (Why did they not send me the letters they had intercepted!)

As I have said, Mme Lebègue had made herself responsible for antemarital favours; and she went so far as to make me go to bed with her one night when I had stayed rather too late. She was disappointed. She had been praising my lubricity all the evening, yet, in spite of this, I did not touch her. . . . But I must add that, when I went to say goodnight to her daughter, who was already in bed, the girl took the precaution *ut refrigesceret Venereos ignes, mentulam ore captam emulserat!* Unhappy man! I saw that both women were utterly immoral, and yet I did not fly from them! . . . I deserved my fate; for it occurred to me that the girl must be very experienced even to dream of such a thing! (From what I learned later, she enjoyed giving this kind of pleasure, and had given it to Turpin, Guillaume, Chacheré, and even to Parangon himself, though he never charged her, as did the others, with resembling Queen Vashti, the first wife of Ahasuerus; he had in fact repeatedly refused to lend himself to this practice, and only consented in the end to degrade my future wife the more. Also through his offices and through those of Motré the rich, who was of the same build, I was presented with the clear and very wide road of the damned, instead of with the narrow way of the elect. Just punishment for all my previous sins!) From that evening Agnès, either through imprudence or because her mother had changed her tactics, or because of the insatiable lubricity of her temperament, lavished her person upon me. The very next evening she came to see the Rüttots, and they kept her for supper. I escorted her home and, in between the first and second doors, she allowed me all the freedom I could wish; and I noticed that her breasts were much less firm than those of any honest girl (such as Émilie Laloge, Marianne Tangis, and Rose) that I had ever touched, and even than those of Tonton Lenclos in 1754; they were like the breasts of the sisters Guigner or Mme Linard, or of any woman who has had them well kneaded. I was amazed! I asked for the ultimate favour, and she told me to come on the following Sunday, while her mother was absent at High Mass.

I kept my assignation, and found Agnès adorned to receive me; but her little sister Suzette, aged ten and a half, was there too. I thought I was to be disappointed, and whispered a complaint. "No, no," smiled Agnès. "I am busy for the moment, so play with her for a little, and later I will send her on an errand." The charming little girl began to play with me. "Make love to me," she said, "as you do to my sister or my mother." "I should like to very much. Come, do what they do," I added, to see how much she knew and how far she would go. Suzette kissed me on the mouth, slipping her tongue between my lips, because, she said, that was how her cousin *Couly* (Deschamps) kissed her. She went much further; she touched me with her hand, and made me touch her with mine; she wanted . . . in a word, I saw that there was nothing that she did not know about the most secret mysteries. "Who showed you all that?" "Oh, I saw it without anyone knowing." "Whom did you see?" "Oh, I saw Mamma, who knows much more than my sister." (This reassured me a little.)

"But your mother does not do all that to me." "She does it to someone else." "To whom?" "To Rüttot. . . . But you must not tell anyone that I told you." "And your sister?" (The little girl reflected.) "Oh, only to you . . . only to you." Just at this moment Agnès, whom I had heard splashing water, rejoined us: "What are you doing in that position, Mademoiselle?" And she took Suzette off my knees. "Run and fetch my shoes from Pointe. You know the shop? In the Marché aux Poules." "Yes, sister." And the child left us with a sly smile. "What were you doing to her?" asked Agnès. "Nothing. She was doing it to me. She has made me ready for you." Agnès lay down on the couch: "Come!" "Can I be in a bad house?" I thought to myself . . . and I threw myself upon her. . . . She clasped me tightly with both arms . . . and yet I was guided. . . . She wriggled; I sought the goal, into which I had plunged without being aware of it. Then Agnès began a vibratory movement which I have never met with in anyone else . . . and pleasure supervened.

I was so drenched, that I had to make a comprehensive toilet. I watched Agnès at hers, and thus engaged she was the perfect prototype of a Paris Miss. It must be admitted, however, that the Venus Callipyge had not more beautiful haunches, and that her leg and foot were perfection; and this doubtless was why she took care to let me see them; they increased my lust for her. . . . As she was finishing, I discovered that Suzette had stayed at home with her sister's permission, but I could conceive no reason for this singular proceeding. In the evening there was another scene. Rüttot came to supper and, when we rose from table, he took Mme Lebègue in his arms in such a way that her daughter and I were obliged to shelter behind the window curtain, in order not to be witnesses *de visu*, as we were forced to be *de auditu*. . . . I occupied myself in exploring by touch all the beauties I had seen in the morning. Agnès was wearing the white shoes with very high heels, which it had not been necessary for Suzette to fetch. . . . On this occasion, by peeping through the curtain, I could have seen, as I did see on another, the kind of service which the little girl had rendered me while her sister held me in her arms; but the salacious and provocative Agnès threw the curtain over my head, and so assailed me with caresses and voluptuous titillations that I could pay no attention to what was happening on the other side of it.

While I was still drunk with this first taste of pleasure, that is to say, on the following day, Monday, the wily Agnès Couillard forced me to go to my parents for the day to obtain their formal consent, because, she said, someone else was courting her daughter. (It was that Leroi whom I had already met in Mlle Baron's company.) I left on horseback, and it was on this journey that my mount escaped me, and was stopped in the valley of Irancy by a charming girl of Accolay. I asked her name and told her mine. She was called *Laurotte*, and was the daughter of *Charruat*, nicknamed *Laramée*, my mother's cousin. We kissed each other, and an idea came into my head which I should have acted upon had I then known what I only found out three weeks later: it was to abandon Agnès and beg my parents to ask for Laurotte on my behalf. But the idea lasted no longer than the kiss. I saw this sweet cousin again in 1764, and with a mortal regret for having let her go. . . . When I reached home, I delivered a pompous eulogy upon my sweetheart's family. On the one side, her father was a man of merit and generally esteemed; at the moment, he held a position in the Army as apothecary. (He was dead, but no one knew it; unless Mme Lebègue, armed with his authorisation to sell and liquidate his property, knew it and concealed the fact.) He had influential patrons and could rebuild his fortune, of which something still remained. There were only two daughters; Agnès, aged twenty-two, and Suzanne, who was only ten or eleven. Agnès was well related on both sides; on the mother's to M. Robinet de Pontagny, the sub-delegate, to the Beralds and to the barrister Couillard; on the father's, to the Parangons, the Barons, the Blondes, the Deschamps, and finally to the Quatrevaux who were also related to us, and through whom she was connected with Mme Parangon who came of this fine family. I mentioned the Paris Lebègues, of whom one was a secretary in the Chancellery and the other, M. Lebègue of Presle, was a celebrated physician and the intimate friend of Chief Justice *Sarron* (who afterwards became the last presiding judge). I also mentioned M. *Duportail* (afterwards a minister), and the financier *Couteulx*. The family's ancestors were as honourable as our own: René Lebègue's father had been Lieutenant to the Provost of the Mounted Police, and as such was so much esteemed that he was still lamented after twenty years; René himself, my future wife's father, was one of those rare men who extend the compass of the art they practise; he had studied the dosage of each medicament proper to different temperaments, and had corrected prescriptions given by ignorant doctors, after he had visited their patients. Yet he never contradicted the Faculty; he saved the dying in silence. The disinterested way in which he practised his profession was not calculated to enrich him; but his father had left him some property, and he was content with that. . . . His ruin was accelerated by a lawsuit which did him the greatest credit: the grocers, for the most part coarse and uneducated men, used to sell made-up drugs to the peasants and the town vine growers, and René Lebègue, who witnessed the frequent mistakes of these automata, undertook the task of saving the public from their blunders and also from the stupid and atrocious malice of their assistants. He attacked them with the weapons of reason and good sense, and yet, who would believe it, the cause of reason, good sense and humanity was defeated! It was that infamous Counsellor Pasquier who decreed René's arrest and ruin. . . . (To-day, the 30th of August, 1784, the grocer Demachy has been condemned with costs for selling made-up drugs; René Lebègue brought his case thirty years too soon.) Mme Lebègue's mother was one of those excellent women whose memory is a benediction long after they are dead. She passed for a saint.

All these details I gave to my parents, and they were satisfied. Parangon could not have pleaded his drab's cause better than did I. . . . I returned to Auxerre with instructions to ask . . . *M. Parangon* to take the preliminary steps! It must be admitted that even *Poinsinet* was never hoaxed as I hoaxed myself. . . . On the way back I thought regretfully of my pretty cousin Laurotte, or Laurette; but I was deluded by my own encomium, which I had learned from Mme Lebègue while held clasped to her vast bosom. . . . When I got near to Auxerre, my heart swelled, and I wept for Marianne Tangis whose sister I saw in mourning.

Parangon acceded to my parents' request with seeming indifference, but he was eager enough in reality for he went about the business next day. Mme Lebègue was overjoyed, and from that moment she regarded me as her son-in-law. Indeed it is impossible to describe the point to which she carried her attentions and complacence! Her daughter showed me some affection, but she was anxious about certain well-founded rumours which were abroad concerning her, and prepared the way by hints for a confession which would show her in a favourable light. If I had visited Rose at this time, I should have known every detail of what had happened during the summer before; but I saw not a single one of my old friends of either sex. They were all married or gone away, and of those who were still to hand, Maîne Lebègue, who had married Colombat's brother-in-law, was Agnès's cousin and her mouth was closed with regard to that family; the demoiselles Baron and Mlle Blonde were also her cousins, so they held their tongues, and I went forward confidently. It was from Agnès herself that I had my first intimation. She admitted that she had been in love with a certain Turpin, the son of a man named Trumeaux, who had married twice and was clerk to the passenger boats. She used all the artifice natural to her sex to make the most of her sacrifice of this lover for my sake and yet not appear inconstant. She mentioned a notary who had courted her, and emphasised the fact that I had been chosen in preference to Leroi. . . . In brief she used every little wile to raise her value, and pardonably, perhaps.

My parents came to make the formal request for her hand; but the evening before their arrival, La Rüttot, who up till then had had nothing but good to say of Agnès and her mother, suddenly changed her tune and told me terrible things. . . . I was myself the cause of this outburst of remorse, or rather Mme and Mlle Lebègue brought it about by a piece of shamelessness as stupid as it was incredible. . . . This is what happened. . . . Agnès Couillard had two rooms on the ground floor, one of which she had let to the excise men as an office. I had sometimes seen these two men, Lescovan and Destianges, at the house, and had felt jealous of them; but I had never let this be seen, as Mme Lebègue's greatest complaint against her husband was that he had been jealous. . . . One evening, when I came to pay my usual visit, the daughter, at a sign from her mother, left the room as I came into it. It was nine o'clock, and I could not imagine where she had gone to. I waited patiently for half an hour. At last I heard, or thought I heard, Agnès's voice in the Excise Office, and, a moment later, while the mother was trying to distract my attention by the most shameless caresses, I caught the sound of noisy kisses. . . . I was on thorns; horrible ideas (and they were correct) chased through my mind! "Are they tricking me? Can this salacious woman, forgetful of all decency, have sent her daughter to enjoy another man next door, so as to excite herself and get more pleasure out of me? . . . You have made a mistake, Messalina! Or does she take me for a fool and set me at defiance? . . . If I only knew!" I was cold as marble as I thus reflected. At last, when it was after ten, Agnès came back. I was beside myself with jealousy and indignation; if I had been certain of the facts then, as I was later from her own confession, I would have boxed her ears; as it was I did no more than rise and, bowing silently, withdraw in a temper.

I had suffered so much that I, who am always so discreet in matters of love, on this occasion sought to comfort my heart by a word to La Rüttot. It was as though she had waited for an opening; her emotions overflowed like a torrent. Mme Lebègue thought La Rüttot was her friend; it never occurred to her that sharing as she did . . . the senses of a young husband (the man had no heart) she was certain to be loathed! I had come to La Rüttot to be reassured; what she did was to set my mind in a tumult. She told me everything that had happened on the famous, the notorious occasion when my betrothed was insulted near the harbour; an adventure which had led to her being denounced to the police. It was a long story, which I will relate in a moment as it was told me by Mme Lebègue; her friend and debtor, La Rüttot, amplified it with slanderous notes and comments of her own. She drew a hideous portrait of the mother and daughter! "Then why," I exclaimed, "did you praise them so much in the beginning?" "Lud, I did not know you then, and I was afraid you would betray me." This seemed a good enough reason. "Well, my father and mother arrive to-morrow," I said. "I will set out early and see the parents of another sweetheart I have in view, and request them to ask for her instead." "Oh, don't do that!" exclaimed my hostess in a panic. "Rüttot would murder me!" "But what do you expect me to do?" "You have gone too far to draw back; M. Parangon would never forgive you. She is his cousin." I was impressed by these words, and La Rüttot, seeing this, continued: "Besides, perhaps jealousy has made me exaggerate a little; for I am jealous . . . of the mother." And she wept. I left her, and went to bed in the strangest perplexity.

And what did La Rüttot tell me? That "the mother was a shameless harlot, who had had thirty-six lovers; that she gave herself to Rüttot in front of her daughters, and made her little girl do the most disgraceful things." (I had seen all that.) . . . "That she was a spendthrift and was selling the property bit by bit, in virtue of a general authority, although she knew perfectly well that her husband was dead." Afterwards she told me the daughter's story. "Mme Lebègue was very harsh to her, as profligate mothers always are; she treated her like a slave, and degraded her to the point of making her assist in her debauches." (I had seen something of the sort in the case of the younger girl.) "When she reached the age of sixteen, Agnès could endure this kind of life no longer, and ran away to Sens. Her father followed her there, and probably she told him everything. At first he made a great fuss about it, but very soon the pest, as he called his wife, found means to silence him; for she caught him caressing his daughter . . . in an improper manner. . . . He left Auxerre shortly afterwards. . . . Such was Agnès's position when her father left. Her mother went lame after the birth of Suzette, and she used Agnès as a crutch. One day she leaned so heavily upon her that she dislocated her shoulder, and Agnès nearly died, for she got a beating on top of it. . . . As the mother's reputation spread abroad, she was held in an increasing contempt. It was necessary to extend this to her daughter, because, when Agnès was a child, every mother in the place would have been proud to call her daughter-in-law so that their sons had conceived a high opinion of her, and this had to be destroyed by scornful treatment lest, in consequence of an outworn prejudice, they should be tempted to make a foolish marriage with poor, ugly and dishonoured Agnès Lebègue. For this reason people will always turn savagely upon a girl who has been rich, honest and pretty, and is no longer so; for the small-pox had left Agnès plain. Contempt led to assaults. . . .

The first assault occurred after Agnès's parents had apprenticed her to needlework. Her mistress went out to her clients by the day, and took the girl with her. This completed her ruin. M. Lebègue had just sold his house in the *Marché aux Poules*, in which he had his apothecary's shop, to retire to a small house owned by his wife; the same one which she was occupying at this time. One evening, when Agnès was going home by way of the deserted *Rue des Grands-Jardins*, a clerk named Burat, a cousin of that surgeon's apprentice who was mentioned in 1754, seized her and trussed up her clothes. But although Agnès did not cry out for help, he could not violate her, because one has to be well placed to rape a virgin. So she only suffered some brutal handling and a pollution. . . . The sound of approaching steps drove the blackguard away.

The second assault was much more serious. Mme Lebègue was a very careless woman, and left the selling of her property to lawyers. When she grew stout and lost her freshness, she became lazy about going to see them herself as she could hardly ever get anything out of them; so she sent her daughter instead. One of these men, a hypocrite called Desœuvres (I mention him by name as a punishment to vice), shut the door of his office upon Agnès and made certain suggestions, in a manner worthy of the inurbanity (irony) of a lawyer. . . . *Mentulam pro digito comprimere jubebat* (La Rüttot said it in French). "Agnès resisted, and threatened to call his wife who was in the next room. Then the canting lawyer threw himself at her feet and asked her pardon, saying that it was a temptation of the devil; and proceeded to revenge himself for her refusal on her mother's property." For I must mention that it was not the creditors, but the lawyers who, by multiplying costs, completed Lebègue's ruin. Why do we not crush this pestilential brood? (We have to-day, the 24th of April, 1791, but it will spring up again, alas!)

"Motré the rich was the third to assault Agnès; he lured her to his house for breakfast, and plagued her for more than two hours.

"Her fourth experience was more agreeable. It was with her young neighbour, Guillaume, a handsome boy, but weak and consumptive. He left her a virgin.

"Chacheré committed the fifth assault, and no one knows whether he carried home the bacon. He was one of the initiators of the famous case. My sister Tonton will tell you the story ; she knows it.

"Her sixth experience was with her little neighbour Turpin Trumeaux. Oh, he hit the mark all right, and more than once, they say.

"Her seventh affair was with my husband Rüttot; he told me all about it one day when he was in a rage with her, because she played the prude and affected to despise my sister Tonton Milon.

"The eighth was probably with M. Parangon. . . ." (She did not mention his name, but I guessed it.)

"She was assaulted the ninth time by one of the carters for the passenger boats. He removed a bar from a low window in the stable, and slipped through it into Mme Lebègue's garden. They say that Agnès mistook him at first for Chacheré, and addressed him by that name; and that when she found it was not he, she tried to escape. However he held her tightly and, thanks to the work of her eighth, with a few threats he got what he wanted. This river louse was amazed at his easy passage, and called her an out-and-out whore; he told the whole story to Chacheré, who was furious with Agnès; and this was the real origin of the case, which otherwise would have been inconceivable.

"Marie Devarainne, her tenth, also got into the garden through the stable. But he was too weak to succeed. He blamed his failure upon Agnès, though it certainly was not the girl's fault, and that is why he joined in the suit against her.

"I will not bother you with the eleventh, twelfth, thirteenth, etc., because we should never finish."

Then she related the history of the case; but I prefer to give Mme Lebègue's version: it was less accurate no doubt, but also less humiliating. All these details are necessary, to make what follows credible.

I went to sleep reflecting on all that I had heard. That La Rüttot should have so strongly opposed my proposal to ask for Rose Lambelin astonished me. It was because the thought of Parangon presented itself to her terrified imagination; also, inconsistently enough, she could have wished me to turn my mind to her sister Tonton, the ugliest girl in town. I only found this out later. . . . Then Loiseau's fatal words calmed me!

Like a talisman they effaced the impression of all I had been told, even of what I had myself heard; and brought me a refreshing sleep. . . . When my parents arrived, Parangon took them in hand; and I, influenced by the honoured memory of my friend and ashamed, perhaps, to retract my eulogy of a few days previously, said nothing of my new discoveries. The request was made; my parents ordered my wedding suit; and, at Parangon's instigation, lent my future mother-in-law the money to buy what was necessary for her daughter. I found myself muzzled.

My parents left the same evening, for they never stayed away from home, and I went as usual to Mme Lebègue's house. My manner with the girl was grave and serious, and she asked me what was the matter. "Yesterday you left the room as I came into it," I answered, "and did not return until it was time for me to go. Presumably you were with someone . . . whose company was more agreeable to you than mine." And without waiting to hear her defence, I turned to the mother: "Permit me to ask you, Madame, about a certain case: it is being dinned into my ears, not by my cousins the Mairat-Servignés, for they know nothing of it, but by Monsieur Chambonnet the dyer." "Sit down, and I will tell you about it," she answered. "I will begin at the beginning.

"When we left the merchants' quarter, after we lost our case against the grocers, we sold our house there to pay our debts to the chemists of Orleans, and came to live in this one which belongs to me. At the house of her Aunt Mogeot, her father's sister, my daughter met an honest and well-behaved young man called Guillaume, who would have made her happy had he lived. . . . When he was breathing his last, he said to his friend Chacheré, who is the son of the director of the Passenger Boat Office: 'I commend Mademoiselle Lebègue to your care; you are my friend, and she likes you; take my place in her heart.' And Chacheré promised. Consequently, after Guillaume's death, he courted my daughter, who received his attentions favourably enough. At this time there was still something left of our fortune, and it must be admitted that, with a little more aptitude for affairs, I could have kept what we then had. . . . Two young neighbours of the same standing and meeting every day, are apt to indulge in little liberties, or rather the young woman is not always on her guard. But a girl is none the less estimable because she is a little indiscreet at times or a little too kind, when this is the result of heedlessness rather than of lightness: we know what young people are. Chacheré, who was no Adonis either in face or figure, was flattered by being the favoured suitor of a girl who had been the prettiest child in town, and who had only lost a little delicacy of colouring through the small-pox; whose father was the cleverest man in the district, and whose mother, I venture to say, was far from being a fool. He grew jealous. My neighbour Mme Trumeau's son, a handsome, dashing, well-made young man, and a fop of fops, came to spend the autumn with his mother. This Turpin overlooked our windows, and used to see Agnès at her embroidery or scalloping every morning; he was a neighbour, and we were friends with his mother; these things gave him a right to call on us, and he called. You know what Parisians are. His showy looks impressed us, and seeing this, he soon made himself at home. As he had nothing to do, he was always either in our house or at his window; Agnès could not raise her eyes without meeting his, and when she worked too long without raising them (for I saw everything that went on), he used to throw a little ball of paper at her, and then she would look up with a smile. And this was what Chacheré saw, and it made him tremble with jealousy. Agnès gave him no comfort. Turpin's foppish airs had had their usual effect, and she wanted him as a child wants a butterfly. As for the little Parisian, he knew from the man himself that Chacheré was jealous, but instead of honourably withdrawing in favour of a suitor who intended marriage, he only grew more ardent and more assiduous in his attentions to Agnès. He wanted to excite jealousy (for that sort of man does not love), and with smirks and gestures he gave just the impression desired, and at the same time irritated Chacheré beyond bearing. But Chacheré was too much of a coward to attack his rival; he revenged himself on my daughter.

We liked Turpin, however; he was the son of a good neighbour, and also I am as fond of butterflies as my daughter. He became an intimate friend and Chacheré was furious; but he made no complaint; he brooded, and his hatred produced monstrous results. . . . The first horror he committed was to introduce a river carter into our garden through the window of the passenger boat stables, and then incite the man to boast of having enjoyed Agnès. . . . (I ask you, is it even likely?) Secondly he let in Marie Devarainne, dressed in a red suit similar to one of Turpin's, by the same route, and then spread it abroad that Devarainne had done all that he . . . could. . . . In the third place he drew to him some women from the dregs of the population, by persuading them that they had seen him taking liberties with my daughter. . . .

"He had given up coming to see us, because he got but a cold reception as we did not like his manner. He quarrelled with my daughter about this, and got a severe scolding for his pains! . . . This precipitated his fourth outrage, which was the origin of the case.

"The plot was laid. It is easy to understand how Chacheré persuaded our near neighbour Devarainne to take part in it, as the latter used to see us every day from his terrace and professed to be in love with Agnès, to whose address he had been seen masturbating to the point of exhaustion. Chacheré got into touch with his rival directly he saw the latter was jealous. But we cannot conceive why he brought a stranger called Nizon into it, an out-of-work ship's lieutenant who was staying with Madame de Gurgis. Chacheré was a jealous lover, burning with a thirst for vengeance; Devarainne was suffering from a passion for one who was his inferior in fortune; but what grievance had Nizon, that he should have been made by the two others to take part? . . . We have every reason to think that his pretext for the outrage which I am about to describe was some satirical verses directed against certain magistrates and private persons, in which Nizon was mentioned by name, probably to supply a rhyme to *gazon* and *oison.* We can think of nothing else at all probable. . . . As for the verses, they were almost certainly composed by Devarainne and Chacheré after Turpin had returned to Paris; they were infamous, and, with an excess of cunning, they were especially directed against themselves and, with equal subtlety, against certain magistrates, so as to induce the latter to avenge them. . . .

"When they had thus paved the way (roughly enough, for they took no steps to prove the handwriting), they prepared to put the most atrocious, the most insane insult upon a girl whose age, social position, and father's employment in the service of his country, was recommendation enough to anyone who was not a savage. One Sunday, about four o'clock, when Agnès was taking a walk with three neighbours, Mlle Valois and the Mlles Laconche, near the little bridge of the Benedictine tower, Chacheré, Devarainne and Nizon rushed down upon her, uttering atrocious insults (Nizon was the spokesman). They menaced her with their hands and threatened to throw her into the water; and Nizon, the infamous Nizon, had the barbarous impudence to touch her breasts as though she were a public woman. Agnès and her companions screamed, people came to their help, and the three blackguards were driven off with difficulty.

"Next day (who would believe it?) the aggressors brought an action against my daughter. They sought to cover up their own crime by laying to her charge the scandalous verses in which they and the magistrates were libellously attacked. . . . I am indolent in affairs, and did not bestir myself until I heard that these men were prosecuting my daughter, on top of having insulted her. I lodged a complaint. I alone had the right to do this; and yet that idiot *Baudetson*, who is Mayor of Auxerre for life and Prefect of Police, summoned Agnès Lebègue to appear in person before him. He treated the daughter of a citizen absent on Government service, a girl belonging to greatly respected families, the descendant of an honourable line through her maternal grandfather, and through her maternal grandmother who was regarded as a Saint, a minor moreover and subject to her mother's authority, as though she were a wretched public prostitute; and this on the accusation of three rakes without position, fortune, or fixed residence, two of whom were themselves minors. . . . My daughter appeared, but with her mother. I made light of the business, and talked banteringly with the fool of a mayor, while giving him to understand that I could involve him in the most serious business, and one which might lose him his life appointment; and forced him to record the counter-action in my name. The case was heard; the accused became the accuser; the witnesses to the public insult were numerous and irrefutable. What did the accused do? They claimed to justify their insult upon my daughter by proving that she was the author of the infamous verses, and the Criminal-Lieutenant of Auxerre took no exception to their defence because he wanted to favour his cousin Devarainne! Incredible as it may seem, this quibbler went so far as to institute an enquiry, and called witnesses to this legally irrelevant counter-charge which, even if it had been proved, would not have justified the perpetrators of the insult! . . . Auxerre is the only town in Europe with such skulking quibblers for magistrates! Suborned witnesses, the female scum of the *Marinerie*, gave evidence, and deposed, not that they had heard my daughter recite the infamous verses, nor that they had seen her write them (which was the sole object of the enquiry), but that they had seen Chacheré put his hand through the stable window and slip it up Agnès Lebègue's skirts, and that she, being in the garden, submitted. There were reasons and to spare for overruling this evidence! In the first place, as I have said, it was irrelevant to the enquiry; and, in the second place, it was one of the accusers himself who gave evidence of his own shameful conduct with the accused, so that objection could have been made that he was the corrupter. . . . How could any magistrate admit a procedure which was so subversive of legal justice? . . . These women said that they had also seen Turpin take liberties with Agnès Lebègue. Well, supposing this were true, did it authorise Chacheré, Devarainne and Nizon to threaten her with physical violence, to try to throw her into the water; to treat her like a drab and handle her breasts? But the facts were untrue, and the bribed witnesses, who were only less contemptible than the magistrate who gave them a hearing, were frightened by what I said in my reply to them, and publicly retracted their words. . . . In their embarrassment, the three blackguards sought refuge in influence; and they found patrons in Auxerre, in the birthplace of the good Debierne, in the town which has become the abominable infanticide of the daughter of a man who is an honour to its name and to the Army! . . . They tried to intimidate me; our good cousin, M. Parangon, who had been brought near to us by this business, counselled caution; even my daughter implored me not to press the case. But I was favourably placed with regard to the supreme magistrates at this time, and thought it my duty to write to the Attorney-General. He did not answer my letter, but he made enquiries through the King's Attorney for Joigny, whose account of the matter was such that the Criminal-Lieutenant of Auxerre was summoned to Paris, and is still there. As I received no answer, and did not hear until later what he had done, I wrote to the Governor of Dijon, M. le Comte de Tavannes; because Nizon boasted that Tavannes knew him and was his patron. I told M. de Tavannes that Nizon made use of his protection to insult the women and girls of the Province, and especially ones who, through the absence of their father or husband on the service of the State, were less able to repel his scandalous attacks. I then described the insult which had been put upon my daughter, and all that the royal and municipal injustice of Auxerre had done to favour the guilty parties: Nizon, who was the neighbour, through Mme de Gurgis, of la Rupelle's private Lieutenant; Devarainne, a cousin of the Lieutenant-General; and Chacheré, the son of the director of the passenger boats. Monsieur Billetou, surnamed Pissmalice, revised my memoranda to the Attorney-General and to the Governor of Dijon, wherein, as I had had no news of my husband for a long time, I was careful to state that I was a widow and my daughter an orphan. The Comte de Tavannes, amazed at this monstrous procedure and by Nizon's strange behaviour, did me the honour to send me an answer which I have carefully kept. Here it is:

> *'I have read your letter with interest, Madame. I am not acquainted with Nizon. Seek justice through the ordinary channels; and if it is refused to you, have recourse to my authority; for this is most nobly and most legitimately exercised in the protection of the wives and daughters of men employed on the King's service.*
> DE SAULX DE T.'

"I showed this letter to everyone. Nizon was mortified, and the judges of Auxerre, who would gladly have crushed two defenceless women, turned their quibbles to stifling our legitimate complaint. The King's Attorney, Renaudin, who passes for an honest man, did not do his duty, and the whole business was quashed because my success would have been detrimental to Devarainne, Chacheré and Nizon. I appealed to the MM. Poissonier, but, though they are close friends of my husband who studied to be an apothecary under their father in Dijon, it was in vain. Lukewarm, as are all our friends nowadays, they advised me to keep quiet. And as I am by nature indolent and only act under the impulse of strong excitement, I let the matter drop. Also the Governor's letter had produced a prodigious effect! Nizon was covered with ridicule, and this, combined with the absence of the Criminal-Lieutenant, so terrified the gutter rats who used to insult my daughter, that they could not pass her save with lowered eyes. That, Monsieur, is an exact account of what happened; and you can judge for yourself whether the case was to our discredit."

I answered that it was quite the contrary; Loiseau's talisman was still working, and the woman had moved me to great indignation against the infamous aggressors. . . . I paid little attention to Agnès, who was sulking, and fell into a deep meditation occasioned by a comparison between La Rüttot's account and that of Mme Lebègue. The points of correspondence between the two did not escape me; they frightened me, and Chacheré's vindictiveness, which was unintelligible in Mme Lebègue's version, was not so in La Rüttot's. . . . And what was the fruit of my meditation? Weary of seeing all my matrimonial plans come to nothing, I threw my hands above my head, as did the Duke of Orleans later when condemned to death, and said: "This pit is as good as another!" and, turning to

Agnès, held out my hand to her. Her heart was full of resentment against me, because she had seen into my mind; but she was constrained by her cousin Parangon and by her desire to silence certain persons she suspected of traducing her, so she took my proffered hand and kissed me ardently. The senses have always subjugated me.

Such was the situation between myself and Agnès Lebègue at the beginning of 1760. I continued to blind myself throughout the Carnival and Lent, and wrote to Agnès every day as I had done formerly to Rose Lambelin, but I made no verses to her. La Rüttot, seeing how things were, said nothing more against either the mother or the daughter, and seemed to regret that she had ever done so. The two Lebègues were violently suspicious of her, but they kept this to themselves. The Lebègue family gathered together on Easter Eve, to give their consent to the marriage in the absence of the father.

Finally, on the evening of the 21st of April, my parents arrived. They stayed with my cousins, who were vexed with me because I had only paid them one or two hasty visits since my return to Auxerre; and they regarded this as a sign of contempt, or at the least of indifference; whereas it was only that I had been busy with my work and pre-occupied with my thoughts, since, through Parangon's machinations, I had been bewitched by his cousin. Why had I not gone to live with them? Because, as I had meant to make love to Sophie Chavagny, I went to lodge with her father; and afterwards I could not follow my own inclinations.

Next day, April the 22nd, Agnès and I went to the altar. As her case had made a great stir, the road from the house to the church was lined on either side by inquisitive spectators. I did not notice their manner; I looked at no one except Edmée Servigné, who came up to me as I left the house and kissed me, saying: "Ah, Cousin!" Then I heard: "He is Edmée Bertrand's cousin!" repeated on every side; and apparently this fact led to the abandonment of certain insulting plans. . . . So we walked to the Church of Saint-Loup between two hedges. I do not think that there were less than fifteen hundred people present, drawn from every quarter of the town and every class of citizen. Permit me a moment's vanity: I looked handsome that day, that day of my moral death; the people praised my looks, and said that Agnès did not deserve me. The bride, fearing the adverse criticism of the Curé *Creuzot*, wore a big bonnet covered with a cambric handkerchief. It may be mentioned that M. Creuzot, although an admirer and panegyrist of her maternal grandmother, Agnès Berald, was so prejudiced against my betrothed, about whom he knew more than one tale, that, far from praising her from the pulpit as he had her grandmother, he had hinted that she was a scandal. The fatal marriage vow was pronounced; and, as I turned to look at my cousin Edmée who was praying apart and wiping away her tears, this remark caught my ear: *"So she is married at last! . . ."* And I thought to myself sadly: "And you are bound, wretched man!" I returned from the church in the painful conviction that I was lost! And I was. . . .

Neither Edmée nor any of my cousins joined us at the house; my family, that is to say my parents and my sister Catherine, returned home directly after dinner. The dancing began after they had gone. Mlle Maîne Blonde attended our bridal party, but the two sisters Baron and the three sisters Bezanger, who were also Agnès's cousins, did not appear. Still more strange, Maîne Lebègue was not present; she blamed me for Marianne Tangis's death, and excused herself on the ground of some important business with which she had to help her husband. Agnès's aunt Mogeot, her husband and their daughter, Nanette, attended, but not her cousins german, the Gendot girls (of whom there were five including the daughter-in-law), nor her three cousins, the Morillons. M. Parangon was present, and he brought all the workmen after my parents had left. . . . I was very grateful for Maîne Blonde's politeness; she stayed to the end, and I scarcely left her side; and I may add that I kept her well amused by telling her the history of the little poems which I had written to her in former days and sent by my fellow prentice Bardet; I even thought I saw that her fine eyes were moist. This emotion was another indication of my misfortune.

So here I was married! . . . I did not pay my visits till long afterwards. I remember that Mme Baron said to me: "So you have married Mlle Lebègue. She is very lucky." This excellent woman had always liked me . . . blessings be upon her! . . . We had dancing again on the following Sunday evening, but we retired early. Mme Lebègue who, among her other faults, was fond of wine, had apparently tossed off a few glasses too many, and tried to force us to get up again. "She is drunk," her daughter said. "It happens every day, and if you yield once we shall be her slaves for ever!" She was possibly right, and in any case I did not want to dress again. Her mother made as if to strike us. "If she hits you, hit her back," said Agnès. "That is the only way to control her." So I assumed a terrible expression, and threatened her with a chair. Mme Lebègue was a coward as are all women, although she had led a sort of bachelor existence up to the age of eighteen; and she went away quietly, saying: "If Mademoiselle Blonde had been there, you would not have gone to bed so early." And she smiled. . . . I was disagreeably surprised at having been forced to threaten my mother-in-law five days after my marriage. Someone must surely have come to our ball to whom Mme Lebègue wanted to show special consideration; but who could it be? Rüttot perhaps; or possibly Destianges and Lescovan. . . . How could I guess? The woman was so shameless that she might have wanted to amuse herself by watching her daughter's manner when dancing with her former paramours. I knew not what to think. Agnès Lebègue had gone to see her good friends the sisters Roullot the day after the wedding and, her cousin Mlle Blonde happening in at the same time, all three girls had united to urge her to be a good and faithful wife to me; since then, she seemed to have given up all her lovers, except the handsome Destianges, whom she saw from time to time. If Parangon had her, then he raped her with the connivance of her mother; certainly I sometimes found her in a state of shocking disorder. . . . An observation: I had well earned my cruel lot through my former dissolute conduct. Never project the punishment of vice into a future life, which wicked men fear less than good and laugh to scorn; prove to them rather that retribution comes inevitably in this one, and then you will frighten them. . . . I was born to be a good husband; Madelon Baron knew this instinctively when she chose me, but I needed an excellent wife, such as she or Jeannette Rousseau would have been; or Manon Prudhot, Colombe, Edmée Servigné, sweet Tangis, Zéphire, Suadèle, Zoé, or Sophronie; I dare not add, or Mme Parangon. . . . I was apathetic and confiding; I wanted to be able to rely on the discretion and capacity of my companion, and let her arrange my life so that I could concentrate on my work. Thus I abandoned my person and my earnings to Agnès for more than twelve years; nor did I withdraw this trust until she left the house in 1773.*

*It may be added that Restif, as he himself admits, after he found that his wife by her skill and industry was able to support herself and his children, gave up his printing, when it was beginning to prove profitable, for writing which often brought him little. "Restif's conduct in these circumstances," as Funck-Brentano remarks, "makes all the more revolting the abuse and calumny with which in his books, letters, and among his friends, he never ceased to pursue his unfortunate wife; and renders all the more ridiculous the reproaches of practical incapacity with which he constantly overwhelmed her." [Ed.]

I remember one small incident which happened about this time. I took Agnès Lebègue to see my people at home, and our visit gave me the idea of making Edmond introduce Manon to his father in the *Paysan-Paysanne pervertis.* My father welcomed Agnès kindly and I left her there for a week, while I returned to Auxerre. During her visit she managed to win my father's affection, so that he entirely ceased to believe what Cochoix the sailor had told him in Auxerre to her discredit; and when I went to fetch her on the following Sunday, I found that all my family had grown fond of her. My father was so infatuated that, against my wish, he kept us until the following day, so that he could come with us to Courgis and introduce her himself to my brothers and invite their admiration of his first daughter-in-law. . . .

Up to this time I had been deluding myself; but on the Courgis road, the road which I had so often traversed in the days when I adored Jeannette, a host of reflections overwhelmed me. . . . The first was the difference between the mothers of Agnès and Jeannette. The former was a thriftless unprincipled woman, whom I could not trust; the latter was like my own mother, economical, capable, and as upright as she was kind. I could have relied on this excellent mother if she had been mine, whereas I had nothing but distrust for the woman I had left at home in Auxerre. The comparison depressed me, and I dropped a little behind the others to give rein to the tears which I felt rising to my eyes. . . . My father was leading Agnès's ass and talking to her, so I was left alone. I thought of Jeannette, and wondered at myself for never having made or asked my father and mother to make some effort to approach her parents! It was as though I had come to myself again after more than ten years! . . . Buried in these thoughts, I caught sight of Laloge; tears poured down my cheeks, and I knelt to ask pardon of Marie-Jeanne. "And her kind mother, oh, why is she not my mother too!" I exclaimed; and a voice answered, or so I thought: "Because you did not deserve her!" I rose and followed the others at a distance. My grief was nearly spent as we drew near to Courgis and my father summoned me to join him, when, as I was ascending the hill opposite to the one which drops into Préhy, I was accosted by young Rousseau, Jeannette's brother! He greeted me cordially, although we had scarcely ever spoken to each other, and I introduced my father to him. As Edme Restif addressed Agnès as *daughter*, and Agnès called me *My good friend*, Rousseau asked me in a whisper if she was my sister. Oh, what regrets! It was as though not until this moment had I completely lost Jeannette! Rousseau invited me to come and see his parents. I need not say that I did not go! I was never to speak to Jeannette. We left directly after dinner. . . . Unhappy me!

When all the pother of the wedding was over, I concentrated upon my work, confining my ambitions to being a good foreman. I forced Parangon to regard me as a man valuable to his interests. Nicolas, the former favourite of his wife, he hated; but he loved his foreman; and the conflict between the two feelings was at times amusing. He would abuse Nicolas savagely for a trifle, and his rage showed every symptom of malevolent spite; but at the very height of his fury he would control himself and save me the trouble of answering by saying himself all that I could have said. As Geollin-Linard, his regular mistress, remarked one day to the cook: "I can't understand the master at all; he quarrels with his foreman and then makes it up again, as one quarrels and makes it up with a mistress. . . ." And, as a matter of fact, Parangon often used to give me some sort of apology for what he termed his irritability.

As for my home life, my father used to send us wine and corn and eggs, but everything melted between the fingers of my spendthrift mother-in-law, until I was obliged to beg them to send no more. And that was not all: my meagre earnings – only forty-five sous a day – all went to pay Mme Agnès Couillard's debts; even Parangon admitted to Agnès Lebègue that he had not realised what a bad bargain he was foisting on to me. I do not know if he felt any remorse; for my part, I had what my conduct deserved. . . . I must say, in justice to my wife, that she warned me that it would be impossible to live with her mother, and advised me to go to Paris and there put myself under the protection of the MM. Poissonnier. I liked the idea of moving to Paris, but I had little taste for being patronised by the Drs. Poissonnier, or by the Duc de Bourgogne's nurse who was married to one of them. I had no claim on these people, and I have always hated patronage; I prefer to live by my own efforts, as I have done up till now, the 29th of September, 1796.

But the conditions I have been describing were only used by Agnès as a pretext. Her real reasons for wanting to go to Paris were to escape from her mother, that imperious and intolerable woman; to escape from Parangon, who had not so far penetrated her, but who violated her when she was pregnant with her first child, Agnès, and four days after her delivery, to be certain, as he said, of being the first; and finally to follow handsome Destianges, who had gone to Paris. She flattered this young man with the assurance that he had begotten her first child, on a certain occasion when he had possessed her in the loft upon a sheet. (We shall see later on how I found out all these details, upon which my four volume novel, *La Femme Infidèle,** would throw considerable light if any copies are still extant.) . . .

*Restif began to write that "criminal book" (as Funck-Brentano terms it) *La Femme Infidèle* in March 1785, while still living with his wife. It was published in 1788, at first under a pseudonym. [Ed.]

Agnès decided to go ahead of me, on the pretext of seeing her patrons before I arrived; but she never had a serious reason for anything she did, and her real motive was to secure her cousin Blonde, the most agreeable fop in town, for travelling companion. She also had the more creditable motive of wanting to avoid a farewell rape from Parangon. She called on him the evening before she left in order to get some money out of him over and above what was due to me, and spoke of her departure as still uncertain, even promising to be kind to him the evening before it, should she really go. Thus she got the money she wanted, and yet escaped him, mixing as always vice with virtue. She was going to stay with my sister Beaucousin, so as to economise her slender capital, and while there, she meant to call on Mme Poissonnier.... I remained behind to earn enough for my journey, never reflecting that Parangon could not long remain in ignorance of Agnès's departure, and that he would then have no reason for keeping a foreman, who was unnecessary now that the work had decreased. However, I had instructed Agnès to call on Knapen to see if he had any work, and, as his answer was favourable, my mind was set at rest.

Such is the story of my second sojourn in Auxerre and of my marriage. We have now reached the month of June 1761.

I have passed quickly over these eighteen months of my life, and must now go back on them. Apart from Mlle Blonde, about whom I shall have something to say, Agnès Lebègue had two intimate friends, *Claudon* and *Marianne Roullot.* They were Mme Chardon's sisters, and shortly after my departure Claudon became Madame Simonnot, wife of the attorney, and Marianne married M. Lesserez, a merchant. I have already mentioned Marianne, who was an enchanting child when I was a prentice; but I had never seen the provocative Claudon. Though heavily marked with small pox, she was perfectly made from head to foot and had a something softly voluptuous about her carriage and way of walking; in a word, she was so attractive as a whole that it was impossible to see and not adore her. Apart from her pretty face, Marianne's breasts were so white and downy that all the virtue in the world was no guarantee against desire in her neighbourhood. . . . I often used to chat with the sisters after my marriage. I grew fond of Claudon in spite of myself, and Marianne raised a tempest of desire. After Agnès's departure these two charming girls became my consolation. I wrote verses to Claudon, who appealed most to my heart, beginning, as was my custom, with an acrostic. I will not quote the whole of this poem, as it appears in the *Drame de la Vie*, p. 462: but the following lines, containing the Christian name, are there omitted:

> *Captive less of your beauty than of your goodness, daily my courage is renewed at your side; in you Nodolc, all those celestial qualities which men have praised since time began are found assembled: forgetfulness of wrongs, love, graces and voluptuous delights. Tell me, sweet friend, is there one quality with which Nature has not endowed you? For she has given you sweetness and majesty; and is there anywhere to be found – even in a village – innocence so pure, combined with its fair appanage, the amenities native to the town? Let us complete the tale of what the common suffrage sees in you. . . .*

The conclusion of this poem will be found on the page given above, in the form of an acrostic on her family name, *Roullot*; in it I complete my eulogy of her. . . .

Some days after I wrote another poem to her, which I think is not quite so bad. It will be found on p. 463 of the *Drame*, a work which is the necessary complement of this one.

Finally I composed two other poems which will be found on p. 464. . . . I only mention these facts as casting a further light upon the human heart;

I must particularise for vague statements mean nothing. Do you imagine, Reader, that I have published my verses to Mlle Rose, and those which I have just quoted and which I did not consider worthy even to appear in the *Drame de la Vie*, at no sacrifice to my self-esteem? But let us return to my adventure with these two friends.

I was alone, I was young, I was strong; I was used to a regular sexual life. I dared not run after girls as I had been used to do, and fell genuinely in love with Mlles Claudon and Marianne Roullot; especially Claudon, whose way of moving was more voluptuous and who was of an excessive sensibility. But her heart was already given to Simonnot, the attorney's clerk, and she was to marry him directly he had chambers of his own. Claudon was more reflective than Marianne, whose beauty was of that child-like type which indicates a simple, kindly nature and but little sensibility. I used to call upon the two sisters every evening after I left work. As a married man, I had easier access to girls who were affianced than if I had been a bachelor; while, at the same time, their sense of delicacy was not offended by the knowledge that I was sleeping with another woman; I had entered the class of ecclesiastics and monks. I had declared myself, and Mlle Claudon could see that I adored her. Certainly I desired her to excess! She was accustomed to clasp big Simonnot in her fair arms and had been for some time past; but she was quite unconscious that he was careful of her, for she was surprised that she did not become like her elder sister, Mme Chardon. Touched by my sufferings and the danger (of which I told her) of my responding to the advances of Parangon's bed-fellow, Marianne Geollin, and by the still greater danger *concubandi cum matre Balba, quæ persæpe noctu mentulam et testes titillare veniebat, ut ad complendum ingens barathrum provocarer, quæ Suzannam immaturam adhuc me sugere, ut* *lubricius veretrum fieret, jubebat* (for I had no secrets from these sisters, who, besides, already knew a great deal about Mme Lebègue); touched, as I say, by this three-fold peril, Claudon reflected, and told me to come next day to hear what she advised. And what did this true friend do? She consulted her sister Marianne, and they agreed that, as she had already given her flower to her future husband, Claudon should console me. I went back next evening and was admitted into the shop, which, as is usual in Auxerre during the summer, was very dark. Marianne went to the half door and leant over it; Mlle Claudon remained standing in front of me, and I drew her on to my knees. A moment later I had kissed her, and she had responded. . . . Then I turned her about so that she fronted me, *super ambo femora, geminatum sericumque que femur adjunxi*; she guided me, and I entered the sanctuary of happiness. . . . This awkward congress was delicious! . . .

A few days passed. During this interval Marianne, somewhat stimulated by her sister's example, gave her flower to Lesserez (son of the famous surgeon), who was courting her. Claudon had an adorable instinct of generosity, of which her kindness to me was an example; and when she discovered that her younger sister had been deflowered (for these two good sisters had no secrets from each other), she wanted to share me with her. And Marianne consented for fear of mortifying her sister; a reason that did honour to her. But how were they to suggest this to me?

At noon on the same day, I greeted the sisters on my way to work; Marianne was sitting down, and a slight disarrangement of her neckerchief permitted a glimpse of breasts which gave me the phrase I have used since in my writings, *an Ocean of Whiteness*. My eyes fastened hungrily upon them: Mlle Claudon had a superb bust, but not so white. She noticed the direction of my eyes, and nudged her sister gently. I saw the gesture, and ventured on a compliment addressed to both sisters. When I passed that evening I could see no one at the door, but, catching a just breathed *St!*, I groped my way in, and found. . . . I set the pretty one astride my thighs, and sought love's nesting place. She seemed to me less open, and the *correspondence* less perfect. When we had finished our little picnic, she withdrew; as Maîne Blonde, who had become my friend since the wedding, appeared with a light. . . . Only then did I perceive that I had just enjoyed Mlle Marianne, for the generous Claudon came in on Maîne's heels, having seen that she was about to intrude upon us most inopportunely. . . . I assumed an air of unconcern. Mlle Maîne was friendliness itself to me, and I left with her to go home.

At noon next day I saw Claudon alone, and she told me the truth. This adorable girl, one of those whom I have most respected in my life, had had the finest motives for her action: "I must not get too fond of you, nor you of me," she said. "So I am sharing you. Neither of us is doing any wrong to her future husband. They have plucked the flower, and take all they want of us. They do so freely, now that my father has returned; since he has given up his commission in Poitou expressly to arrange for the establishment of his two younger daughters, and has told our future husbands that the marriages will take place in six weeks. . . . You have been disgracefully deceived by our friend, and we feel it our duty to make some reparation for her misdemeanours; and especially the last one, that of leaving you for . . . Maîne Blonde agrees with us; and if her wedding with Leroi were as near as are ours, she would do the same for you. . . ."

I was well satisfied with this little arrangement! "Confess that you desired my sister yesterday?" said Claudon. I confessed. "You see, I am a disinterested friend."

What I have just described would be hardly credible in Paris; but I may say that I have found much more of this strange philosophy of the devotion due to friends among the women of Auxerre than among those of Paris or of any other place in Europe. The following is another example of it.

Maîne Blonde, as we heard a long time ago, was the nearest neighbour to the printing shop on the Cordelier Court side. When work stopped in the evening, Mlle Blonde used to tap two or three times lightly on the wall and I would go and talk to her. One Monday evening she asked me in a low whisper if I had anyone with me. "No," I answered, "it is Monday, and all my rascals are on the drink." "In that case, go up to the loft; I will put the ladder against the trellis in our tower garden, and you can come down it. . . ." (It was that pretty garden, made upon a tower which had formed part of the old walls of the town, by which Maîne's friend, my dear Madelon Baron, used to enter my attic-closet at night.) . . . I made all haste, and found Maîne alone. "We are quite safe here," she said. "No one can take us by surprise: let us talk." And she sat without affectation upon my knees. "So here you are alone." "Yes, sweet cousin." "Your Roullots have given you but hollow fare." "Ah, yes, hollow indeed!" (And I wanted to laugh at my pun.) . . . One of Maîne's arms was round my neck, and I kissed her. . . . Then my lips sought her mouth, and she did not turn it away. I pressed one firm outstanding breast. She did not resist. I advanced with giant strides towards the temple of Venus. "Ah," exclaimed Maîne. "Émilie Laloge told me that you were the most *careful* of *performers*." I did not answer, but I was not at all *careful*. . . . What energy! This little Maîne was a thing of fire! Afterwards she said to me: "I did not do it for love; I only like you as a friend; I did it out of pity . . . and a little curiosity . . . and a little logic. . . . For after all I have done no wrong to

M. Leroi. He plucked my rose, and he himself boasted to me of having trussed Agnès behind the Grands Jardins four years ago. . . . How many women have you had in Auxerre?" (counting on her fingers), "Madelon . . . , Émilie, Toinette, Marotte, Madame Parangon perhaps! The two Bourdillats, Colombe, Rose; perhaps Manon Prudhot, perhaps Madame Linard; the two Roullots. . . . Oh, you needn't open your eyes at me! Yes, Claudon and Marianne . . ." "Stop, stop, sweet Cousin! . . . You do not believe all that!" "And your wife. . . . That makes fourteen, not counting those I do not know, or whom I prefer not to name." "I have always had the highest opinion of you, Cousin; but . . . I shall have to change it if you are speaking seriously." "Confess, or . . . part!" "I am overwhelmed with gratitude to you, fair Cousin; but . . . if I can only keep your treasured friendship by a gross calumny . . . we must part. . . ." "You shall confess!" she said, taking me by the throat. I held her in a powerful grip. "You little fury!" She struggled a little, and then: "You were right," she said at last, "to deny, and to abuse me! If you had so much as smiled conceitedly, I should have knifed you! . . . There, Cousin, you had them, and myself with them; and I shall respect you all my life. . . . Unhappy man, save through us! . . . And may our favours help you to forget just how unlucky you are!"

I returned the way I had come, and it was late when I left the shop. "Where have you been?" asked M. Parangon furiously. "I have called you and looked for you!" I was very much embarrassed! Parangon gave me a terrible look. "Answer!" "What do you want me to say? Presumably, as I was not to be seen, I was not to be found either." "So it would appear," he answered, coming at me. . . . I do not know what would have happened if Marianne Geollin had not come in by the street door at that moment.

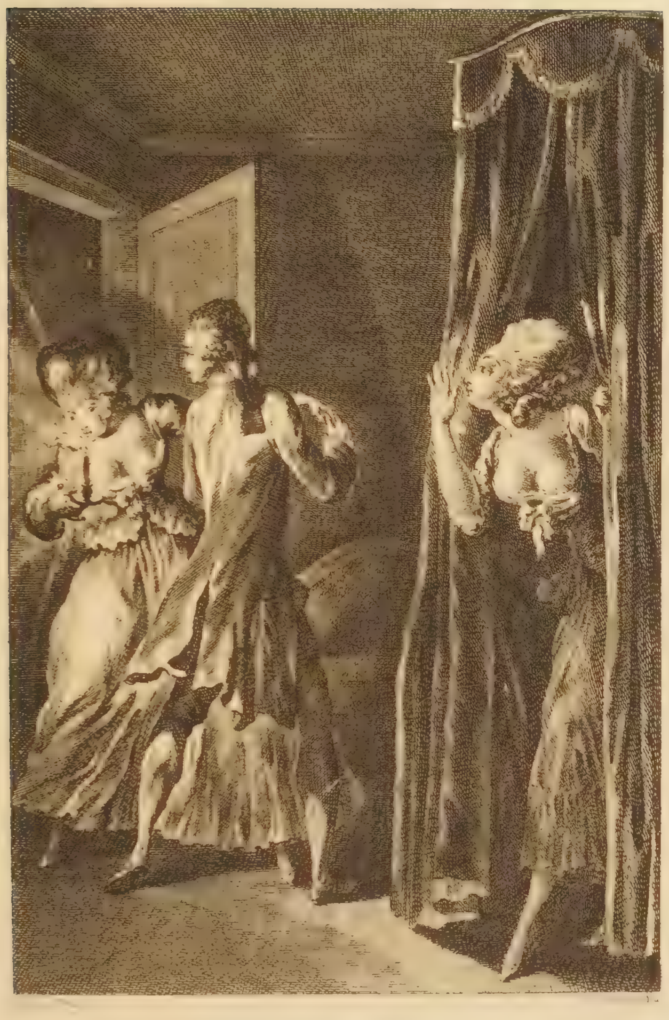
Parangon ran to her: "Where have you come from, Mademoiselle?" "From Madame Baron's." "What, just here? Impossible!" "Come and see for yourself. . . ." They went out together, and I heard M. Parangon say: "You must ask them to bear witness that you were with them." "Witness! Witness! We are not in Court! . . . Much better go and see if he was not somewhere else." "Where?" "With the Mlles Roullot." "But what should he be doing with those young ladies?" "He goes there every evening." I was listening from behind an angle in the clock tower. At last they returned indoors, and I went to say good evening to my dear friends.

All three were together, as Maîne had joined the two sisters. This was the last time I entered that beloved house. Maîne was standing up, rather flushed; Claudon was reclining nonchalantly in a long chair, and Marianne was sitting on a stool, resting one elbow on the counter. "Welcome," said Claudon. "Sit down there" (and she pointed to a chair near her). "Maîne has just told us. . . ." "What? What has she . . . What have you been saying, Cousin?" "The truth," said Marianne, taking my hand. "You are not our lover; you are our friend, and may you always be so!" I took the three hands of the three fair girls in mine and raised them to my lips, exclaiming: "For ever!" "And the verses that Bardet used to bring Maîne were by you?" "Yes, my angel." "Then he has written them to all of us," said Claudon. "My heart tells me that I am bidding you farewell," I answered. "I am so deeply moved!" (I was thinking of the rage in which I had left M. Parangon.) "Sooner or later!" said Maîne. "Yes, I feel he will not be staying," added Marianne. "Do not forget us," said Claudon. "Always remember your three friends, who, solely out of friendship and without need for love, lover, or pleasure, stole a bit of themselves from their future husbands in order to give it to you!" "Yes, my divine friends, I shall remember." "I did what I did," said Marianne ingenuously, "because my sister . . . blushed once at something I said to her. . . ." "Angelic Marianne! I adore you both, you and your sister!" "And what about me, who decided to make a third in the friendship, and was the only one to come to your wedding?" "I owe you more than I can ever say, impetuous little Cousin!" "It is nine o'clock," interrupted Claudon, "and our lovers are due." "He can wait until they come to-day," said Marianne. As she finished speaking, Lesserez, Simonnot and Leroi appeared together. I went away, little thinking that I had said goodbye for ever to two of these dear friends! (For I saw and possessed one of them in 1767.)

Finally matters came to a crisis between M. Parangon and myself. Agnès Lebègue had gone; she had escaped his lecherous farewells, and he was furious. Certainly he had his Marianne Geollin (who afterwards became the wife of a bookseller in Semur and was sister of that Jeannette Pretty-legs who had just married the servant, Lelong), but she had not the same zest for him as had his enemy's wife. I had trained an apprentice, one of my Vermenton cousins, and he was capable of replacing me in part. No sooner did Parangon see, in correcting the proofs, that young Manicat's intelligence would make it possible to do without a foreman, than he found a hundred petty complaints to make against me. First he scolded me for what he called my little chats with Maîne Blonde. I pointed out that I only talked to her when it was too dark to work any longer. He lost his temper. Then he incited two workmen, Guillaume (afterwards a bookseller in Paris) and his Rüttot to insult me. . . . I put up with everything patiently enough at first, but one Sunday, when, unknown to me, the men had been to work, he destroyed a little window box which I had planted and set upon my window ledge. This grieved me very much when I arrived on Monday. Yeury repeated some of his cousin Parangon's insulting remarks about me, and I flew into a rage. My enemy was within ear-shot. I spoke as my hatred prompted me to speak of the man who, in Mlle Fanchette, had deprived me of wife and fortune. . . . Parangon came in raging, and we were ready to fly at each other's throats. . . . I did not let him have the pleasure of dismissing me. . . . As I put on my coat, I told him I was leaving him, and he took me at my word: it was all he could do. . . . Thus I left the house that in old days had been so honoured by me and so dear to me; and I left it for ever!

I felt as though at least one heavy weight had been lifted from my shoulders. I swore never again to stay in Auxerre, and never again to have any dealings with Parangon, whom I consigned to my unending scorn.

I was longing to see my friends to tell them the news, but, by a fatality, they were all three out and I could not do so. . . . As I was roaming about the quarter, M. Parangon's cook, *Marie Castra*, came stealthily up to me and warned me that, to judge by certain instructions given to three neighbours, her master was hatching some plot against me. She asked me to tell no one, and slipped away. As I could not find my friends and was afraid of attracting notice, I followed her example. I waited on M. Parangon next morning at eleven o'clock, the hour at which he rose. Four men were at breakfast with him: Devogines, Manon Prudhot's husband; the two brothers Chardon, (the notary, who had been very much in love with Mme Parangon, and his younger brother, the husband of Claudon and Marianne's eldest sister); and Maîne's brother Blonde, a well-mannered rascal just back from Paris. I saluted them, and then said to Parangon: "I am leaving your service . . . to join my wife in Paris. Have you any complaint to make against me?" Parangon remained tongue-tied. . . . I insisted. "No," he answered. "You have always done your duty as foreman." "Then you have no designs against me?" "No." "You are wise . . . for I have the original of your letter to Tourangeot. That will tell you enough. I am now going to my honest parents, so I will say farewell; for I shall never see you again if I can help it. . . . Farewell! And remember with remorse . . . all the harm you have done to me! . . ." The four guests were amazed at Parangon's perturbation and silence. He had just been telling them terrible things about me, in connection with their wives and sister and sisters-in-law. . . . I claimed them as witnesses. "That is all right for Parangon," said Blonde. "But it has come to my ears that you have kissed my sister." "Once on the cheek, when she came to my wedding." "Oh, and other times." "Whoever says that, lies like a trooper!" "Well, well, well! My little sister never likes any but honest folk, and this fellow defends himself like an honest man. . . . I have nothing more to say." This drew a smile from the others, and I retired. . . . I could not see my friends, and dared not approach their doors, frightened as I was by what Blonde had said. I left for Sacy the same day, and my parents gave me what was necessary for my journey. Then they produced four letters with the Dijon postmark from my father's deed box, and handed them to me, saying: "We did not open them." I opened them. . . . What was my amazement to find that they were all four written by Omphale during the last months of 1759, and urged me to rejoin her in order that we might be married! I saw that one of the letters was addressed to my father; he had not noticed this, and read it. . . . "You have ruined my life," I told them, "by not giving me these letters when they arrived, or at least on my return from Paris!" Then I told them all about Omphale: her goodness; her connection



with Mme Parangon; how I was the father of her elder daughter Hypsipyle, and of Edmée-Colette who passed as her younger daughter. My father knew all about the latter's origin from Mme Parangon herself. . . . "You have prevented my union with the mother of my children, and have deprived me of happiness and fortune," I concluded. But the grief of my parents was such that I had myself to turn comforter. Then they told me that they had written to Dijon for information about Manette Teinturier and about another lady I seemed to have known there, and had been told *that I had associated with none but wantons or girls I had made wanton: a tavern servant, a little upstart daughter of the hairdresser's clerk, and an unmarried woman with two children.* . . . I could not discover who had written this letter, which was signed with an assumed name: but I suspected my printer Causse, who had seemed cross with me about something during my last week in his house. Here are the contents of Omphale's four letters:

In the first *she urged me to return to Dijon with my parents' consent, so that we could be married. . . .*

In the second she enquired anxiously *if I was ill, and what could be detaining me after all my eagerness to be reunited with my family.*

In the third she said that *she could not recognise Mme Parangon's friend in this indifference and silence.*

In the fourth, which was addressed to my father, Mlle Omphale *begged him to send her news of me.*

And not one of them had been answered! She did not write again, being, no doubt, indignant with me and even with my parents. I wrote and told her about *my marriage* and about *all the unhappiness caused by my not receiving her letters, which had been kept from me with the best intentions by my parents, who had no idea that they came from her.* . . . I received no answer from Omphale after my return to Paris; or perhaps my parents were afraid to send me a deservedly unpleasant letter. I never saw my father again; he died at the end of '63. . .

I went back to Auxerre to find that my mother-in-law had warned the collectors of my approaching departure, in order that I should have to pay the taxes. I was very nearly forced to stop there. I only managed to keep just enough to pay for my passage, and arrived in Paris with twelve sous in my pocket, which I had saved with difficulty by spending only six sous a day on my food during the three days of the journey.

I found work with André Knapen on my arrival, and earned twenty-eight francs upon Factums during my first week. I had the same place as in the days of Zéphire and Loiseau, and this kept me grave and abstracted, so that I worked quickly. Knapen was all the more surprised, as I had been somewhat neglecting my work before I left for Sacy and Dijon. . . . My wife was still lodging with my sister Marie, Mme Beaucousin, (who gave me supper on the 1st November, 1795, old style, at eighty years of age), and I also went to her on my arrival; but, finding myself in work, I took a second-floor apartment in the Quartier de l'Université, at the house of the wine merchant opposite the *Fontaine Saint-Severin.* I worked energetically, but I bore Knapen a grudge for not having employed me on my return from Dijon in 1759, thus causing a marriage of which I had not as yet full reason to repent; so I left him directly I was certain of a place in the business of young Quillau's mother.*

However I did not stay long with my new employer, as Renaud, who had always blamed himself for not having obtained employment for me in the Galeries du Louvre at the end of 1759, worried our friend Mme

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*See the 6th *Contemporaine.*

Werkawin to such good purpose that he got what he wanted. He told me the news after I had been three weeks with the widow Quillau, and I left her, although I could not earn much at the Galeries du Louvre. Fifty sous a day was hardly enough for the barest necessities of a married man and a father. My daughter Agnès was born on the 10th of March, 1761, but was put out to nurse in Sacy near to my parents, without whose help I could not have existed. During this time of distress, Mme Lebègue, who was well aware of my embarrassments and was dissipating the remains of her daughter's fortune, had the impudence to ask me for money; money from me, with only one wretched pallet bed and no curtains! No, I could not have existed if I had had to keep my daughter, without degrading myself to cringing and intrigue, and this I have always avoided. As it was, I had to run up debts, to furnish barely with a table, a broken-down bedstead, a chair or two and some crockery. Agnès Lebègue understood nothing of economy; indeed she had had no chance to learn it from a spendthrift mother with a greater capacity for selling things than anyone who ever existed. I was no better off with her than if I had married an itinerant fruit seller, or a Paris fishwife, or an Auxerre cobbler's daughter! . . . Everything turned against me in these wretched days: Anisson-Duperron, the director of the Imprimerie du Louvre, not content with keeping back half of the hundred sous a day allotted to us by the State, stopped work on all holidays, so that, instead of fifteen francs a week, I often had only ten or twelve, and the infamous Duperron added the cost of the food I was forced to deny myself to his millions! . . . His son, who was like him, has been guillotined. There is no need of a future life for the punishment of wicked men. I was brought to the lowest depths by poverty; I was ashamed in the presence of my fellow countrymen; I hardly had the courage to write to my parents, who, at the proper time, had made several objections to my marriage with Mlle Lebègue.

Agnès had a second daughter. My sister Beaucousin and a M. Defer, a native of Vermenton, were her godparents. My poverty was obvious, and I was cruelly rallied about it by the coarse M. Defer. . . . Mortified on every side, my heart grew bitter. I never saw anyone. Agnès Lebègue still kept herself neatly dressed, and was only despised the more for it once the neighbours had seen our home (people without property or resources always rouse contempt); they regarded her as a common drab who put all she had upon her back. Some of the neighbours made her the most insulting proposals, and among others our landlord, the wine merchant, who had always treated us with respect until he saw our plenishings. Then he thought that Agnès would eagerly accept the position of kept mistress, and offered her nine francs a week, to be supplemented by presents of which our rent would be one. . . . I do not know what possessed Agnès Lebègue to repeat this kind of proposal to me, but she always did so. Was it vanity or shamelessness, or a set intention to humiliate me? Was it frivolity or boasting? Perhaps a little of all these things. . . . My abject poverty prevented me from leaving the house; I had not the money to pay twenty francs for the quarter and move elsewhere. A woman accustomed to poverty in the Capital, or even in the Provinces, would have managed to pay the rent and keep us on my fifty sous; but Agnès Lebègue was used to comfort and was still decently dressed. She had the bourgeois vanity that is ashamed to buy the things which the poor eat, or to economise or patch my clothes; if she deigned to work, it had to be on something clean and lady-like. So she sent out the heavy work, my printer's stockings and overalls, and this cost more than her delicate work brought in. Also it cost more than we earned together to keep up Mlle Agnès Lebègue's "appearances." We were ill-nourished on good beef, because for six days of the week we had to subsist on this same beef badly warmed up. I ought to have looked after the expenditure myself, but I have always loathed house-keeping.

Soon I was so wretched that I despaired of a marriage which the inexperience and carelessness of my capricious companion made disastrous. And this first year was strewn with roses compared with those which followed after! Misunderstandings were followed by quarrels; and Agnès Lebègue revenged herself on me as wives do revenge themselves upon their husbands. But not for a moment did she choose her lovers to ease our poverty! No, we were only the worse off for them. She would not let me come back to dinner, but either gave me a piece of bread and a slice of old warmed-up beef, or three sous for the day with which I bought a saveloy or some fruit. Sometimes I would eat nothing but some dry bread saved from the day before so that I could afford a dripping cake at six sous for the day after. I ruined my digestion. And why did Agnès Lebègue refuse to have me home to dinner? Because she said it upset her work. Honest Reader, she had never discovered her Destianges in Paris, whether because he had left or because he had taken another mistress; so she replaced him with three men whose acquaintance she had made: *Chéreau de Villefranche, Johnson-Cahuac* and *Lafray*. Chéreau de Villefranche used to own a picture shop next door to us; but he and his wife, a very pretty little humpback, were now living in a furnished room which overlooked our windows. His wife was an only daughter, but her father was so ill-disposed towards her that, we were told, he had drawn a pistol upon his son-in-law. Chéreau brought a case against his father-in-law, and the shop was shut after the latter had had all his son-in-law's goods confiscated. Johnson, who occupied the room next to Chéreau, was the recently converted son of a refugee; he called himself an Englishman, but his real name was Cahuac. Lafray was an adventurer, the friend of Chéreau and his wife's lover. These three men drew lots as to which of them should have my wife, and Mme Chéreau held the hat. The lot fell to Johnson-Cahuac. Before the lots were drawn, a possible difficulty was discussed in the absence of Lafray: "If her husband is in the way," concluded Chéreau, "you know how fascinating my wife is, and how seductive she can be when she wants to; she will warm up the husband while we bring the wife to heel. Madame Chéreau can even go the limit if the game amuses her; Lafray's rights are no more sacred than mine." Mme Chéreau played the prude a little, but finally she said: "We will see about it." This arrangement will give some idea of the company Agnès Lebègue was going to frequent. And it must not be forgotten that the hussy was to force me to endure all the details of what passed; have me invited to two or three of their parties without my being able to refuse; and incite Mme Chéreau to seduce me; either by means of her little feet, encased in white shoes, which she would ask me, at a sign from my wife, to buckle for her, or by requesting me to lace her, with her firm white breasts uncovered. There was a fifth member to this household, in the person of Lambertine, a young blonde from Antwerp, who was chambermaid to the wife and mistress to the husband. She would have been given to Johnson (nicknamed in jest Grosbondon) if he had not been lucky in the draw. . . .

December was the worst month in the year; during it I lost twelve francs and ten sous through the holidays (how I cursed them!), and while everyone else was making merry, while they were visiting one another and celebrating Twelfth Night, I found myself in want even for bread through the cutting down of my salary! Often I expostulated with Agnès for her careless want of economy, or at least for her lack of method in laying out my earnings. She justified herself at length, only to prove that she had spent all the money (and it was precisely for that that I was reproaching her), or else she resorted to tears and sulks, and sometimes fell into a rage. . . . In the meanwhile the miser Anisson-Duperron, fattened on the substance of his wretched underlings, was able to bestow a dowry of a million and a half upon his daughter, on a marriage which made her the Marquise de Lambert! I tremble with rage when I think of such monsters.

I had no money for dinner on Twelfth Night, 1762; and Agnès Lebègue had not come back from the furnished house where Johnson and Chéreau lived. So I ate a piece of bread and read the *Morals of Epicurus* by the Abbé Batteux. At seven o'clock Agnès reappeared. I reproached her for her prolonged absence, and she answered that she had been dressing Mme Chéreau's hair, and had been detained until that moment. However she had consoled herself for the meagre fare I was enjoying by the sight of a fine turkey being put on the spit, of which I was invited to partake. I accepted her excuses, believing, none the less, that Mme Chéreau was an expert. She departed again, saying that I should be fetched within the hour. . . . I did not much want to accept, but I was hungry. She had scarcely left me when I heard a woman's footstep on the stair. I thought it was Agnès Lebègue returning, and did not disturb myself. Some one put a cup of coffee on the table, saying: "Madame is most distressed to have been the cause of your having no dinner; she sends you this cup of coffee and a liqueur, and hopes that you will join her at supper. . . ." Then I looked up and saw a very pretty blonde, in a white apron which indicated her calling. I thanked her, and swallowed the coffee, which did me a great deal of good. Lambertine poured me out a little glass of liqueur, and went away, saying that she would come to fetch me at eight o'clock if I did not appear. . . . Mme Chéreau's politeness, the coffee and the liqueur, and Lambertine's winning ways finally decided me. However I waited for some one to fetch me. This did not happen until a quarter past eight, by which time the coffee and liqueur had given me a devouring appetite. I was made very welcome, especially by Mme Chéreau; for there was a plot afoot to punish Lafray for being unwise enough to display jealousy in this wanton company. Mme Chéreau made me sit beside her, and helped me to a wing and half of one side of the breast. At first I could do nothing but eat; but when my appetite was satisfied, I turned my attention to my pretty neighbour's coquetries. She poured me a full glass of wine, and I responded with a gallant compliment, praising her white breasts, one of which she had wantonly exposed by folding one side of her neckerchief over the other. On my expressing my admiration in these lines from La Pucelle:

Who would not be idolatrous of the same?
Under a neck that is the marble's shame
Stand separate twin bosoms, formed to proof,
Coming and going, and made round by Love:
Their little buds are little buds of rose.
Distracting bosoms, witting no repose,
Eternally you call the hand to press,
The eye to fasten, and the lip caress.

a cry arose: *He must kiss them!* Lafray made a slight grimace; and Mme Chéreau, noticing this, immediately offered me her naked breast to kiss. I knelt to take advantage of this favour: "He shall kiss both for getting on his knees!" exclaimed Chéreau, and uncovered the other one. Intoxicated, I pressed each rose bud to my lips, and this so agreeably titillated the lady that she took my head between her hands and pressed it close. Everyone applauded save Lafray, who exclaimed impatiently: "Zounds, Madame, you are not comfortable there! Let me put you more at your ease." And, lifting the pretty hump back from her chair, he carried her to the bed, and then returned to the table. I also returned to my seat. Lambertine went to her mistress, who must have told her to take the chair beside me. Supper finished, Lafray took his departure. A moment later there was a slight stir, and Lambertine took me home, protesting that I was drunk and would beat my wife. She laughingly undressed me, and put me to bed. At this moment Agnès Lebègue appeared. "Gently, gently!" said Lambertine; and then in a whisper: "Sulk with him, and refuse to say a word!" One of the women went downstairs, the other was undressed in the twinkling of an eye and lay down beside me. I was excited by all that had happened, and threw myself upon her, crying: "Come, come! A beating, a beating!" and then murmured in my delirium: *"To pretty Chéreau! . . . To pretty Lambertine! . . ."* The latter words evoked so lively a response that I was lost in admiration. I fell asleep, but I returned to the attack two or three times during the night. . . . I woke up to find my wife deeply asleep at my side, but the shameless Agnès told me later that the night had been spent as follows: I with Lambertine, Chéreau with his wife, for whom debauchery had reawakened his lust, and Johnson with Agnès. Also, that Mme Chéreau had refused to sleep with her husband unless I had Lambertine; that Lafray had come back in the middle of the night and Chéreau had relinquished his place to him. So Mme Chéreau was well entertained; yet she got into a rage with Lambertine next day, because the latter claimed to have had the better time, etc. Such was the crapulous party to which I was an innocent accomplice. But there were to be others in which I joined knowingly, and therefore guiltily, as we shall soon see.

I had, as a matter of course, introduced Agnès Lebègue to my sister Margot. Margot did not take to my wife, which was scarcely to be wondered at; but, on the other hand, a pretty young girl, apprenticed to the same dressmaker, was much attracted by Agnès, and this *Adélaïde Necard*, or *Nicard*, was to extricate me from a dangerous and degrading society wherein husbands prostituted their wives – from the company of such as Chéreau, Johnson-Cahuac and Lafray. But not immediately. . . . O angelic Adélaïde! Fair Nicard! It was you who saved my heart from degradation and debasement – who knows? perhaps from crime! For, reduced to the last extremity, I wrote to my three good friends, Claudon, Marianne and Maîne; and Mlle Nicard intercepted this sore complaint, which might have fallen into hostile hands and compromised both my three friends and myself. But before I commemorate this generous girl, let us return to where I was.

At the beginning of 1762, I find this entry in my note books: *I have nothing to say about these years of death* (referring to the two which had just passed). . . . Indeed I was bowed beneath the weight of poverty, equally tormented by Agnès Lebègue's thriftless disposition, and my own tendency to economy. I vegetated in the Imprimerie Royale, working but feebly for want of strength, my face emaciated, my appearance unkempt; degraded and despised, Duperron put me on a lower level than a pet animal. . . . My only pleasure was in reading. Renaud lent me books, and this was a vital service in those wretched times. As for Boudard, he had already developed chest trouble and I was soon to lose him. I read in secret, even during my work hours, making up in speed what I lost in time; for my colleagues had expostulated with me for getting through too much, on the grounds that one of them would be dismissed for want of work. I had no difficulty, therefore, in keeping on a level with my fellows, idlers all, who did even less than I. Thus we earned the money given us by that Turk, Anisson-Duperron, and no more. Sometimes the ogre would catch me at my reading, and then he would deduct a half day's wages, twenty-five sous. It was to steal my blood, and reduce me to counting each mouthful. During this prolonged period of a suffering without issue, I realised that the ill-supported honesty of men without education or principles cannot withstand poverty. Without doubt it was my respect for my father, the fear of dishonouring and grieving him and of giving my step-brothers occasion to triumph, that prevented me from following some mean, degraded course. Continual privation is insupportable to a man of ardent passions, but my father's integrity saved mine; weeping, I would recall the title given him by his fellow countrymen, Restif the Upright, and would say to myself: "Let me rather die than tarnish it!"

My sufferings were enhanced by the good fortune of my neighbour at work. Handsome Mauger was a bad character, a nuisance and something of a drunkard, yet he had a beautiful and economical wife who industriously supplemented her husband's earnings with her own. While my stomach and chest were growing weak through fasting, Mauger had a good dinner every day; and this he would sometimes invite me to share, more because it tickled his vanity than out of compassion for me. "How is it that you always have such a bad dinner, when you are such a much steadier man than I?" he asked. I offered no reply, but thought inwardly: "Because my wife is a bad manager." I knew also that Mme Mauger always kept one of her work girls in the house to be her husband's mistress; for she adored this soulless creature because he was handsome, and preferred him to have one mistress, whom she knew to be safe, than to have him running after drabs, losing his health and risking hers, and ruining her home. . . . (How remote were you, Agnès Lebègue, from this sublime wife!) The comparison between my lot and that of the insensate Mauger filled me with despair.

And how was Agnès Lebègue occupied meanwhile? In gallantries. But, as I have already said, not for a moment did she have recourse to love to pluck us from the breast of poverty. Far from it, the books which Chéreau and his friends lent to her inspired her with a passion for polished wit; and, infatuated with Johnson-Cahuac, she spent all the time that she could spare from Sévigné and Deshoulières (most dangerous of reading for a woman obliged to work) in seeking to rival the former in letters to her lover. These letters she commenced and recommenced from morning to night, until the fire-place was filled with torn paper. She delivered the letter herself in the evening, and it was passed from hand to hand among her friends, who vied with each other in their praise of it (or made fun of it). And Agnès, intoxicated, inhaled the poisoned incense which led her to waste her time. . . . Nor was this all: the newly converted Cahuac found the service of Mme Agnès horribly fatiguing! His chest grew weak, and then the soup from the first boiling of our wretched stew went to him. . . . Agnès had exalted ideas, and was never happier than when she could play lady bountiful to her lovers. . . . O Mauger, what a difference!

I lived in travail and degradation; I whom Mme Parangon had destined to fortune, I who could still have found happiness but for my imprudent marriage! . . .

During this period of our distress, my mother-in-law was continually writing for money. In Auxerre she had had the spending of all my earnings, because my parents supplied us with food; but in Paris her daughter, worthy disciple of such a mother, gave all her time to her lovers, and we never had two halfpence to rub against each other. But even if I had had anything to send to her, would it have been right to despoil my children to make such a creature more comfortable? . . . She was furious because I did not do the impossible and, in her rage, sold the rest of her property, including the vineyard, which had supported her, and even her house. (If she had not done so, her daughter would do it now that she is divorced; so that our two daughters and Agnès's four bastards by Moulins the foreign merchant would be no better off than they are.) However this did not grieve me most. But she also wrote me an insulting letter, which I myself received because Agnès Lebègue was still with her lovers when it arrived at nine o'clock in the evening. Mme Lebègue, or rather the fury who wrote to me, reckoning that Agnès and not I would receive the letter, reproached me with *having enjoyed her and with having assaulted young Suzon and injured her little kalibistri* (a word which she borrowed from Rabelais) *so that it still pained the child.* She said *that she had uncomplainingly endured the caprices of my devilish lust, to prevent me from going to tumble the sisters Roullot and Maîne Blonde, and that the whole town knew what I had done to them after my wife's departure.* . . . In my first anger at this letter I answered her with well-merited reproaches. I pointed out *that I had not enjoyed her, although she had done all she could to bring me to the point, and to make me tumble Suzon* . . . etc. I did not say a word about the Mlles Roullot, but I never expected this letter to be shown to anyone, and left nothing else unsaid. However Mme Lebègue took it to her brother-in-law Gendot, Agnès's uncle-in-law and the only near relative of hers (save Maîne Lebègue) whom I respected; and without mentioning her letter to me, showed him mine to her. M. Gendot was very indignant, and forbade his youngest daughter Marianne, who was very fond of me, and his daughter-in-law, a charming young woman, ever to utter my name! Then he sent me a terrible reply! At the same time Marianne and her sister-in-law (the mother of that Gendot who has a millinery establishment in the Boulevard Italien) collaborated in a letter entreating me not to reply to their father, but to them. . . . So I sent them a detailed account of all the wrongs I had suffered at Mme Lebègue's hands, and enclosed her letter, assuring them that my wife, who had been credited with my answer, had seen neither her mother's letter nor mine. They were horrified, and never willingly looked upon their aunt Lebègue again. It was some consolation to have vindicated my character with two young people whom I loved and respected; but they dared not speak of me to their father. . . .

I have omitted an incident concerning Marianne Gendot and her sister-in-law. In the early days of my marriage with their cousin I often used to go and see their father. My affection for Marianne was of ancient date; she had been one of those beauties who had stirred my senses during my apprenticeship, but as she never came to the ballrooms I did not know her so well as some of the others. Still memory endeared her to me, and she noticed this predilection on my first visit and responded to it. One Sunday, when she and her brother and sister-in-law, Agnès and myself, were having a frolic, Marianne exclaimed: "How well my new cousin of the soft voice would look as a girl!" "We must dress him up," cried young Mme Gendot. "Let us put him into my clothes," said Marianne. "They will be too small, but he can only have mine or Madame Gautherin's" (an elder sister and the loveliest of the four). But I insisted on having Marianne's, saying that I could not look otherwise than pretty in my pretty cousin's clothes, a remark which earned me a kiss. The undressing began. I was passive in their hands, but soon the two sisters-in-law, who were charged with the business, found themselves in a difficulty, and this raised a laugh. They called my wife, but she was not allowed to come. Finally they decided to let me keep my breeches. They found shoes for me, then laced me into Marianne's dainty corset; the lace left me plenty of room, but I was short waisted! They arranged my hair which, being long, provided an ample chignon. . . . At last I was dressed, and finely dressed. They had meant to take me to various houses in the neighbourhood, and I had consented on the understanding that I walked between the two beauties, with the sisters Barbon and Josette in front and Agnès and Mme Gautherin behind. But I happened to pass in front of a mirror. I do not know what the ladies thought of my womanised face, but it horrified me! I looked like a satyr, like . . . everything that is most repulsive in the world; and that in the very same clothes that made Marianne Gendot so alluring! I refused to leave the house, so they went in search of some of the younger Mlle Gendot's adorers and brought them to pay homage to me in a dimly-lit room. Those whom I did not consider sufficiently tender I hit upon the nose. Marianne concealed behind me, spoke for me in her husky inimitable voice, and this completed the illusion. When I revealed myself, I designated those (under emblematic titles) who only loved Marianne with a quarter, a third, a half, two-thirds, or three-quarters of their hearts; one alone, whom she had specially pointed out to me, was complimented on loving her to the full. . . . As she had ten adorers this unrehearsed scene kept us well amused, and increased the good understanding between myself and the sister and sister-in-law, who loved each other. See my *Calendar*, 13-15 May.

Mme Lebègue never forgave me for vindicating myself with her niece and niece-in-law. She put all her own family against us, and the rest of her husband's. Thus, far from being pitied in Auxerre during our sufferings in Paris, I, at least, was regarded as an unnatural child. . . . Nor have I come to the end of what I had to endure! Agnès's friends, including our two neighbours, Zède Vilpois, the wine merchant's daughter, and Javotte Prudhomme, daughter of a lithographer on the third floor, persuaded her that a woman, to be happy in true Parisian style, must be absolute mistress in her own house. So I had to contend against this claim, which she carried to extremes, and it poisoned ten years of my life. Harassed by our endless quarrels, I never went near the house on work days, and fled from it on Sundays and holidays. This was what she wanted and yet she made me pay for it: there were tears and cries because I had not returned to take her for a walk. And if by chance I did accompany her, she contradicted me the whole time and made quarrels out of nothing. . . . Her object was to drive me away from her and yet keep the grievance on her side. . . . I knew not what to do; the roughest work was a rest compared with the company of this fury. To make herself interesting to her Chéreau friends, she attributed her cries, which they could hear, and her tears, of which they could see the traces, to my jealousy of her; while to our two neighbours, Zède and Javotte, she attributed them to her jealousy of me, alleging that I had mistresses. One evening, when she had been abusing me loudly on this count, I left her to fetch our wine, and as I came quietly upstairs again, I heard Zède Vilpois saying to her: "You were wrong to scold him like that! You had a pretty good time with that Monsieur Imbert de Saint-Maurice who made all the chairs creak!" "That is just the point," answered Agnès. "I had no one to protect me, and he nearly raped me!" I would have laughed at this answer if I could have laughed at anything. That same night, with many sighs, she thought fit to tell me (as was her wont) that she had been violated! Unlike others of her sex who take a lover, Agnès played the part of an honest woman, and it made her more sour tempered than ever. She seemed to have the snarling humour of the female cat, who scratches and scolds her Tom to prevent his seeing that he is giving her pleasure; for I found out afterwards that she tormented poor Johnson-Cahuac too. My soul drooped and withered; I cannot say too often that I should have fallen to the depths and been finally lost (either through Bathilde or through Sailly who, seeing my poverty, wanted me to become a police spy and be their "gentleman") had it not been for the deep affection that Mlle Nicard inspired in me. She used to come and see us sometimes without the knowledge of my sister Margot, and her fondness for me exalted me in my own eyes, and plucked me back from the very edge of the precipice to which I had been drawn by Bathilde and Sailly. I had imprudently sought out these girls; they loved me and had saved me from despair, but their minds were contaminated. . . . Mlle Nicard was forced to abandon me on account of the jealousy of her lover, President de Saint-Leu; but she bequeathed me to Mlle Desirée Didier, who was as charming as herself and who was also to save me from the good offices of Bathilde and Sailly.

I could find no rest in myself, for I was dissatisfied with everything I did or proposed to do; therefore, being forced to expand outwards, when I had no books, I wrote. The idea of writing a history of my own life (the origin of this *Human Heart Unveiled*) produced my first creative effort; but I lacked the vitality for it and, dissatisfied, I abandoned it; and books became once more my only relief from suffering. But often I had none, so, buried in my corner, I discovered another way of distracting myself, less dangerous than my visits to Bathilde and less degrading than Chéreau's parties, where no attempt was made to disguise the latter's designs upon my wife. I used to see many pretty girls in their shops, especially in the evenings, and I amused myself by writing letters to them, fond or somewhat free, which I would then deliver myself when I went out in the morning or when I came back from work between eight and nine at night. My working clothes were somewhat similar to those worn by porters, which made my task the easier. These letters together with the sweetness which Mlle Nicard introduced into my sad life gave me some moments of relief from despair. When I wrote to a pretty girl, such as Mlle *Mazange* of the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, Mlle *Lavallée* of the Rue Honoré, Mme *Marchard* the jeweller, Mme *Laurens* who lived opposite the Opera, Mme *Meneau* of the same street as the pretty Mazange and the poet Davé's sister, the Mlles *Decour* of the Rue des Cordeliers, second and third floors, etc., I was, for a few moments, what I pretended to be. I wrote under an assumed name, usually that of Renaud's cousin, Leblanc, the musketeer; and for those short moments during which I took the place of my imaginary hero with a desirable beauty, I felt less degraded. In the evening I had the intenser pleasure of watching my letter read and divining its effect; often I could hear the comments made upon it, and thus entered into the minds of the women who attracted me. For instance, I happened to deliver one of my letters to Davé's sister at the precise moment that a young noble, whose carriage had stopped by chance opposite her shop, seemed to be quizzing her, and thus found out the quality of her virtue and even the extent of her husband's complacence. The latter afterwards allowed her to be kept for ten years by a coarse fellow; one could see him there any evening. . . . I used to write to the Mlles Decour under the name of the Chevalier *de Mirabelle*, and my letters were greeted with transports of delight. None of my beauties recognised the author of these letters in a man looking like a street porter, for they were well enough turned, enriched by reading and always most flattering to them. Such were my solitary distractions (as I shall call them) during the last part of 1761, the whole of 1762 and 1763, and the first part of 1764.

But it is obvious that, with my vivid imagination, my life could not be filled by shadows, and it was the sweet appealing Adélaïde Nicard, as pretty and well-dressed as any of the girls to whom I wrote, who from time to time supplied me with the substance. But before describing a delightful excursion we made together in 1763, the charm of which still lives with me, I must relate the preceding events.

Agnès Lebègue had now regulated her gallantries. I know not by what fatality this small pock-marked woman who, save for her legs and feet, was less pretty than either Mme Chéreau or Lambertine, was yet more sought after than they. In the three men of that company Agnès had three equally ardent adorers. While she was favouring Johnson, she feigned the greatest tenderness for me; when she was hard pressed by Chéreau or Lafray, she made a great display of noble sentiments, depicting my attachment to her in the liveliest colours, and stating that I would die of grief if I thought myself betrayed and deserted! What was her object? To enhance her value. Chéreau was a philosopher in a mad sort of way, very vain, very demonstrative, very much of a boaster, very *anti* all prejudices. He proposed compensating me, and even advanced his special facility for providing this compensation as grounds for claiming the preference over Cahuac. His only difficulty was one of choice. He did not know whether to give me his wife, who had shown some slight inclination for me: against this was his fear of displeasing Lafray; or his Lambertine whom I had already had: but in this case he would have wanted me to give up all rights in Agnès. He stated the position philosophically to the whole company, myself excepted, and Cahuac contended that, if he wanted to give me compensation in the legal sense, he must relinquish his wife to me. Chéreau agreed, save in the event of my preferring Lambertine. "I like that!" exclaimed Lafray. "It is for me to dispose of Madame, if Madame is disposable! Possession is nine points of the law, and I should make trouble." Cahuac, who had taken out his articles as a barrister, or was still keeping his terms, could find no answer to this argument, and there was silence until Agnès, who was becoming sensible of a passing fancy for a rogue called Beugnet, the widow Quillau's foreman, modestly remarked that she did not want to be exchanged. Mme Chéreau and Lambertine said the same, the latter adding that she had a husband working at the Gobelins, M. Antonius Leeman, and that he was the only person who had the right to exchange her. It was agreed to get me to the house and leave the ladies to arrange matters according to circumstances.

So (and incredible as it may seem it is none the less true) they decided to invite me to dinner on the following Sunday, and both mistress and chambermaid were to look their best. Now Agnès Lebègue considered that, if she fell in with the plan, it would be more creditable to her for me to have Mme Chéreau, a respectable woman and a wealthy heiress, than an adventuress such as Lambertine, and advised the former lady accordingly. She was dressed to disguise the slight malformation of her slender body, which, indeed, was not wholly a defect as it made her more short waisted. She had a beautiful bosom; it was raised: small feet; they were encased in new white slippers: skinny legs; her skirt, which she usually wore short, was lengthened a couple of inches. Her beautiful long black hair was arranged in Cupid ringlets, as angels are depicted, a fashion which I greatly liked in women. She was very white of skin and her pretty childish face was pale; she added a touch of rouge. But this Agnès rubbed off, saying that I preferred pallor, so she was left with only the flush produced by friction. . . . As for Lambertine, she was a well-made blonde with a rich complexion, and slightly freckled, which I liked; she dressed herself in her best, but she had thick ankles and had neglected to get new shoes. At first glance Agnès thought her charming when she presented herself for inspection, and flushed with annoyance; then she caught sight of her shoes and laughed in her face, but she did not say a word.

So on Sunday I received a visit of ceremony, and my company was so earnestly besought that I at last consented. My place was again by Mme Chéreau. We dined copiously; I drank little, and Chéreau and Johnson were sparing also. (Lafray was detained by unexpected business.) After the liqueurs, Mme Chéreau became a veritable Bacchante. She coquetted with me before the company and, following her ally's advice, used her bosom and feet to such excellent advantage that I was visibly troubled. No sooner did the others notice this than they rose and unaffectedly left the room. I was quite unsuspicious, and in any case was far from imagining how far depravity could go in a half-educated anglomaniac philosopher. . . . Mme Chéreau continued to excite me, and finally led me to pursue her into a small dimly-lit boudoir which was very favourable to her purpose. . . . I was almost certain of success, but I feared a surprise and, still more, being seen by Agnès Lebègue; for I was unaware as yet of the full extent of her shamelessness, and wanted to avoid reproaches and reprisals. However the young woman removed every obstacle by shutting the door and pushing home the bolt. "Now we are safe," she said, and then called out to the others: "You can't come in here!" . . . There was no help for it, and we were as happy as lay within my powers. . . .

When we finally returned to the dining room, I was amazed to find the whole party collected there! "Pooh, the booby!" said Mme Chéreau, with a little flash of modesty. "He is not dangerous, I assure you! . . . He made me some pretty speeches, but I vow he never did anything. I had my eye on him and was ready to call out if. . . . But Monsieur is too chivalrous for a woman shut up alone with him to be reduced to that extremity." You should have heard the rogue's little voice, agreeably husky through a slight cold! . . . I parried the jests as best I could, but soon perceived that everything was known and this distressed me. Unable to endure Chéreau's glances, I left, taking Agnès with me. (How little I understood this man and his friends!)

Mlle Lebègue, cunning in passion, was careful to make no sign, and this calmed my fears. She arranged another party during the week, which was all the easier as Chéreau paid the expenses. So on the following Sunday I was again fetched for dinner, and, blind as the ostrich who, burying its head, believes itself invisible (doubtless my constitution was weakened by mal-nutrition), I reckoned that, with a little dissimulation, I could lay a false trail. Lambertine sat opposite me, and I apparently devoted myself entirely to her; but meanwhile I reassured Mme Chéreau by gentle pressures of my knee, which she returned quite openly so that everyone knew what I was doing. She was laughing in her sleeve and I saw it, yet thought I was being very wily!

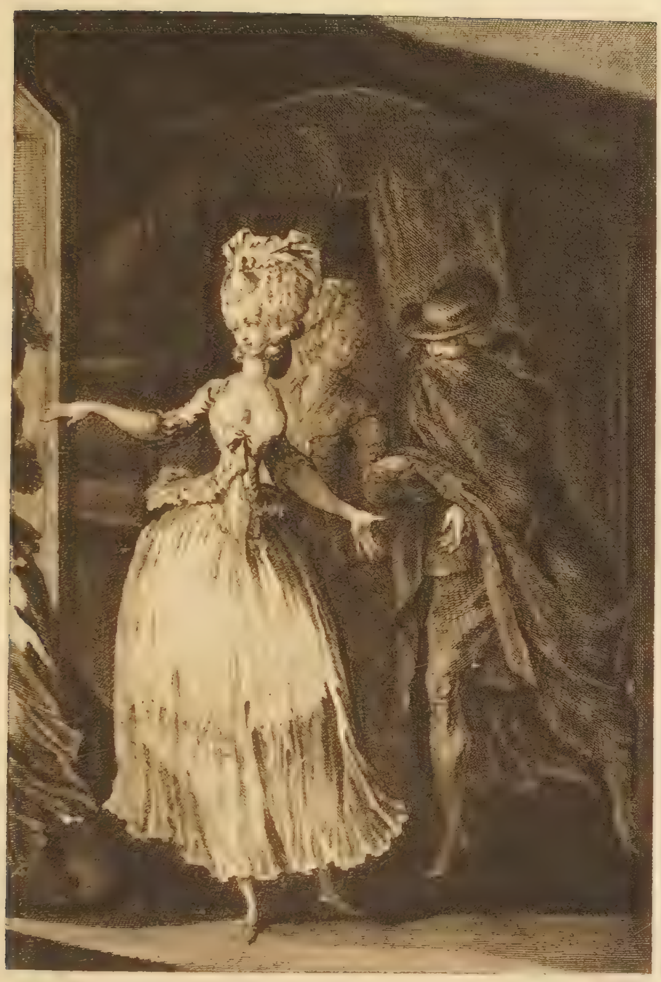
After dinner the process of pairing off was repeated, but according to a prearranged plan of which I was ignorant. Mme Chéreau went into her boudoir, and I rose to follow her; I do not know how Johnson came to forestall me, but I found myself alone with Lambertine, who locked the door. . . . I was unaware that I had already enjoyed her, and congratulated myself. "Come here, my fine fellow!" this girl, or rather woman, said to me. "La Chéreau still bears the marks of your last drubbing and that is why she wants to have her husband to-day. And I want you to give me a daughter – they say you make pretty ones – so that she can keep me some day." It occurred to me to spit in the drab's face, but I was too degraded by my position to become seriously angry. "I want to eat the master and the mistress's bread," she continued, and, drawing me close, she threw herself on her back so skilfully that I was made happy before I knew where. . . . .

We stayed together until eight o'clock in the evening without being disturbed. I did not know what had become of everyone else. At this hour I went out to take the air. There was no light in our apartment, nor in Chéreau's windows, nor in those of Johnson-Cahuac. I went on to the Pont Neuf, and there saw Bathilde and Sailly in a carriage on their way back from the theatre. Although they had two men with them, they stopped the carriage and rallied me good humouredly for having utterly deserted them. "This is our devirginator," they told the two men. "But of our own choice, not for money. . . ." "Ah, how vexed I am that you are married!" added Sailly. "We could have given you another Zéphire! . . . It is quite a romance. Briefly, the girl in question is the daughter of a woman whose husband knows that he is not the child's father. The mother died when she was only three years old, and the man had her brought up without her knowing who she was. When she was twelve years old he brought her to Paris and gave her to Madame. Madame at first tried to find you to devirginate her, but afterwards she changed her plans and has become fond of the girl. We think that she discovered her origin, by chance or through the police. . . . Now she is keeping her for her son by Monsieur Dupont, who is with an attorney. He never comes to the house, and knows nothing about his mother's profession. But if you were a bachelor, we should be seeing you and you could have had her in time; for she does not want to be a light woman, and is always trying to run away. . . ." At the conclusion of this narrative the two girls bowed to me and the carriage went on.

On my return towards ten o'clock, I found everyone at table. They told me that they had been to the theatre. I was surprised to find a young lady of the *Rue du Plâtre* of the company; I scarcely knew her at this time, as I had only caught a glimpse of her once when she had come to fetch Agnès to go to a ball.

I am tempted to think that it was Lambertine who made trouble between myself and Mme Chéreau, by pretending that I had compared the charms of the two women to the detriment of the latter; this I had not done, but the statement satisfied the blonde's malice. Or possibly Agnès no longer demanded that I should be given some equivalent. Whatever the reason, I was never invited to the house again.

Gnawed by worries and vexations and deprived for the most part of those pleasures which gave life its charm for me, instead of playing at cards or m-quads, as did my fellows in the absence of the foreman or when they had seen *Harpagnon*-Duperron safely away in his carriage, I used to go out and observe the Paris Misses at their tricks. I found one strange gratification, which has not been unuseful to me since: I used to slip into the passageways and up the stairs to the apartments of the smarter



prostitutes, who usually kept their doors open, and, entering quietly, I would observe how each man outraged nature according to his peculiar caprice. Sometimes I would play some practical joke, such as shifting the things laid upon the chairs, or throwing a mouse, stolen from one of the many traps in the Imprimerie Royale, at a girl in the thick of the business. What a jump! What screams! . . . Often I would remove the clothes of a naked girl, say, on the second floor, and take them to the first, or to another house of ill-fame opposite; and sometimes chance served me excellently well. One day I found a pretty little girl named Duplessis in the same condition as her neighbour, Lebrun, a tall and beautiful woman whom I had just pillaged; so I left the latter's clothes with the little girl, and carried the other's to her tall neighbour, who was just finishing her business. My extreme lightness saved me from being heard as I laid them upon the chair, and I witnessed her amazement, her anger and her oaths, when she could not get into the chemise. Then I ran back to the other, and was in time to see the same scene repeated: Lebrun's chemise enveloped Duplessis like a sack, and her skirts, which were a foot upon the ground, would have been the height of the fashion nowadays (1790). Lebrun on the other hand found herself in petticoats which reached only to her calves, a corset which hardly contained two-thirds of her diameter, and a dress which had the appearance of a man's shirt. Most amusing of all, each girl was struck by the same idea; that of displaying themselves in their masquerade to their neighbours in business. They left their respective apartments at the same moment, and rubbed noses in the gutter two paces from the house of the younger Crébillon. They stared in amazement, and scanned each other from head to foot: Duplessis burst out laughing, but Lebrun trembled with rage. "Bitch! Thief! To dress up in my clothes!" "Well, you are wearing mine!" exclaimed Duplessis. Paying no attention, Lebrun held her suspended with one hand while she stripped her with the other, much as a roaster of the Rue de la Huchette plucks a turkey. . . . "Here! Are you going to leave me naked and display my bottom to every passerby?" "That's no affair of mine; I take my property where I find it." And she stripped her as naked as my hand, to the great satisfaction of inquisitive neighbours, who were enchanted to see the mechanism which produced Duplessis's voluptuous exterior. And they had their fill of this pleasure, for little Duplessis, finding that the worst had happened, began trying to undress her tall antagonist. The Guard, having been told what was toward, came to put an end to the scandal, but the two protagonists saw them in time and got back to their rooms. Though supported by a despotism, the Guard cannot enter these houses without a warrant; so they retired. Commissary Chesnon was informed, but it was he who received the tax upon them, so he let the matter drop. But he insisted that, when they appeared before him, they should come dressed as when they met each other. Duplessis looked as though she were wearing a domino for a ball, and Lebrun looked not unlike an Opera ballet dancer. Although invested with sovereign power as regards girls of this class, Chesnon had great difficulty in making Lebrun return her clothes to the "little witch," for she accused Duplessis of nothing less than witchcraft. . . .

On my return after having engineered this scene, I heard the door of Duperron's apartment open, and being in my coat, was obliged to hide in a dark corner. It was the Abbé Mandonnet, a young Lyonais and tutor to the two little Anisson boys; and he was giving his hand downstairs to their elder sister. I could see them, because I had been some time in the dark, but, coming out of a strongly lighted room, they did not see me.

Mademoiselle was in a low-cut bodice, and her swelling bosom was of a dazzling whiteness. The little Abbé touched it with considerable freedom, first with his hand, then with his lips, without the young woman offering the least opposition. . . . At the bottom of the stairs they turned into a closet. I ran like lightning to my place, slipped off my coat, showed myself a moment, and then returned softly to the closet door. There were sounds of movement within, so I felt for the key-hole and put my eye to it. . . . The Abbé was preparing the young lady for marriage. . . . I waited. The door opened again, the closet was brightly lighted, I slipped into the shadows. Mandonnet went down; Mademoiselle went up. Burning and devoured by desires excited by what I had seen, I ventured to place my hand and mouth upon that beautiful breast. "Leave me," said Mademoiselle, "you must not enter with me!" I was in a frenzy of lust and took another liberty, which earned me a box on the ears. She went indoors. This young woman has since married the Marquis de Lambert. Let us return.

I played a hundred tricks on the "girls" during the three years that I worked at the Galeries du Louvre, and was so careful that never once was I caught. The scene of one such was a house in the Rue Tiquetonne, opposite the milliner of the *Pied de Fanchette*, whose shop is now a coffee house. In 1766 a pretty girl, who afterwards kept a perfumery at the corner of the *Rue Gilles-Lecœurs*, Quai des Augustins, was changing her chemise with her door a little open. She laid the dirty one on a chair before putting on the clean one, and retired into her alcove. I seized the opportunity to throw both chemises into a hip bath in which she had just been washing. The unfortunate girl only had two chemises. I watched her return, and her extreme astonishment at finding neither! . . . She started towards the door . . . but she was naked. . . . She ran to the window . . . wrapping herself in the curtain. . . . I watched her in great distress end by dressing herself without a chemise. . . . Just as she was going out she saw both garments in the bath! She thought the devil had been in her room. . . .

I will describe no more of these tricks, which resulted from my degradation and my mental nullity; they showed me to what a man may stoop when, trapped in a blind alley of poverty, he has come to despise himself. Such petty cruelties were a hundred leagues removed from my character. It was poverty that turned me base and wicked. Oh, favourite and friend of Mme Parangon, to what are you fallen! A woman was to raise me up: ROSE BOURGEOIS. Not yet, however; but I will touch upon one who was to exalt me a little.

The amiable Adélaïde Nicard had, as I have said, taken a fancy for Agnès Lebègue. Although her mother had sold her to the President de Saint-Leu for mistress, she had retained her modesty and delicate sensibilities. She was attracted to me, but in spite of a strong inclination on her part and a stronger on mine (as will be guessed by the large type used for her name), she did no harm to my morals. In spite of irregular features her face was more than pretty, it was seductive; and she won Agnès's heart as well as mine, as much by the angelic sweetness of her character as by her charms. Agnès divined our sentiments, though carefully concealed, and determined to take advantage of them to satisfy her latest fancy; for she was no more constant in love than in wifely duty. At the instance of her friend, Nicard used to visit us nearly every Sunday and holiday. We could not provide a dinner without exposing ourselves to want for the rest of the week, yet our pleasure in our young friend's company was so intense that we forgot everything else. One Sunday, towards the end of May, we added a little excursion to our dinner. Agnès had on her dress of "gros de Tours" in which she looked radiant, and the plumper Adélaïde a pretty shot silk dress, which made her look like a charming child of sixteen. . . . In the Tuileries we met a certain Beugnet, printer, painter and woodcuttist, but only known in the last-named capacity. He had a stupid, rather bewildered-looking face, and had been my foreman at widow Quillau's, whose lover they said he was, and from whom he had stolen some thirty thousand francs. He saluted me, stopped, and I read in his eyes how amazed he was to see me with two pretty women! "My wife and her friend," I explained. Through I know not what gesture of mine, this strange creature took it into his head that Agnès was the friend, and Nicard, despite her youth, the wife. Agnès made us a sign not to disabuse him; and we saw nothing in this but an innocent jest. . . . Beugnet could not stay as he was with friends, though, as he told me on the following Sunday, he would gladly have left them in the lurch.

He had scarcely gone his way before Agnès overwhelmed me with a hundred questions as to his abilities and means; she could talk of nothing else. "Oh, he is rich enough, and a Hercules," I said laughing, "though you would hardly guess it from his seedy appearance. It falls to his lot to appease the uterine frenzies of his old mistress, so he must indeed be a hero!" Imprudent words to address to a woman I should have known by this time; Nicard squeezed my hand and I held my tongue. But Agnès, shameless wife of a weak husband, insisted on continuing the conversation.

I must mention here, though I did not know it at the time, that Agnès had suffered humiliation at the hands of Mme Chéreau on account of her poverty, and, unable to digest this, she no longer went to the house in spite of her fondness for Johnson. I do not know what attracted her in Beugnet, but he did attract her (possibly as a "Hercules"?) and she suggested inviting him to dinner on the following Sunday to meet our young friend, for whom (as she said in a whisper) he might prove a good match. She added out loud: "If my good friend is agreeable, we can have some fun. He thinks that I am she, and she is I, so on Sunday we will change places; you, my friend, shall put on the apron, which will somewhat compress your pretty waist, and I will play the young lady; my husband will address you brusquely, just like a husband, and say the pretty things to me. . . . It will be amusing. . . ." Let no one be surprised at this! Agnès's heart was an abyss of contradiction, fantasy and inconsequence. She took upon herself to "work" Adélaïde and to influence her. The latter asked my advice. "Consent," I whispered. "The jest will give me a moment's relief from the weight of the rock I am compelled to push." She smiled and promised.

Next Sunday Mlle Nicard arrived in good time, put on the kitchen apron and played the housewife. When Beugnet arrived, he was astonished to find such meagre furniture combined with such an elegant wife! Agnès had hidden herself in the alcove when she had heard him coming upstairs, and now entered through the little ante-chamber, as though coming from outside. She permitted his attentions while Adélaïde did her work. It was Nicard who served the dinner, and while she trotted backwards and forwards, Agnès affected the manners of a guest, and gave tongue in noble sentiments for the benefit of Beugnet. In the meantime I followed "my wife" everywhere, kissed her and murmured sweet nothings in her ear: "I adore you!" "Hush!" "Never!" And I bore her into the alcove and . . . "What is he doing?" "I have burned myself," said Adélaïde, "and he is kissing the place." I rejoined the others. A moment later I noticed that Adélaïde had gone downstairs, when she ought to have been with us. I went down to meet her, and our landlord, the wine merchant, gave me two bottles of excellent wine, saying that the pretty young lady would be back soon. "Who paid for these?" "Your wife. . . . I wanted to send my boy for the pretty young lady, but she would not permit it. However I forced her to accept his escort, for I would rather have followed her myself than let her go alone; she is so pretty that I am sure she would have been beset." "At least he has eyes," I thought to myself," and is not like Beugnet, whose heart is as wooden as his stock in trade. . . ." Then I said aloud: "Her manner commands respect." "That is very true." When Adélaïde came in again we went upstairs together, and I kissed her hands and backside, murmuring: "My wife, my beautiful bride! How lovely you are, and how I love you!" She looked at me with complacence, and we ascended quietly. "What has become of the man and wife?" the wood engraver was asking. "What does it matter?" answered Agnès; and Beugnet kissed her. "She is enjoying our masquerade," said Adélaïde. "Much less than I am," I answered, squeezing her pretty waist. "But are they blind?" "How?" "You so pretty! He so ugly!" "All the better for me!" "For both of us," I exclaimed as she went in. I set my two bottles on the table, and we tasted the wine. "It is excellent," exclaimed the clown. . . . A moment later, two cookhouse boys appeared with a fine turkey fresh from the spit and a large plate of fish stew. Note that we had only provided soup and the meat boiled in it. "Ah, Monsieur Nicolas," cried Agnès, "I see that you know how to do things, and that Monsieur is a close friend!" "One could do no less for you and for Monsieur," answered Adélaïde modestly. Beugnet looked so pleased with himself that I was tempted for a moment to think that he had paid for the meal, which seemed to me most extraordinary! Finally the pastrycook brought in a frangipanni tart and some preserves for dessert, together with a bottle of white wine handed to him by our landlord.

After this copious dinner which lasted until five o'clock, we went out for a walk. Agnès took me to one side, and asked: "Where did you get the money for such a fine dinner?" "I did not pay for it." On that she left me, fearing to attract attention, and I hastened to offer my arm to my supposed wife, finding in our game a delicate pleasure to which I had long been a stranger. . . . "He is afraid some one will steal her!" said Beugnet to Agnès. "He is welcome to her; I bear him no ill will for being jealous of his dear. I prefer your type; it is more lasting."

Although a kept woman, Adélaïde was the most modest of girls; her mother, dazzled by a President, had sold her, but she had not been seduced. Still she had lost that virgin timidity and scared modesty common to girls of her age; and, owing to the liberties she had been obliged to suffer, thought little of trifling intimacies, especially on the part of one as respectful and adoring as myself. . . . She listened with pleasure to my burning phrases, liberally garnished with *my brides* and *my dear wifes*; and complacently permitted the kisses, *blandas imitata columbas*, which I stole from her when we could not be seen. During our make-believe (as she confessed when we said our last farewell) she enjoyed, without, alas, realising it, all the sweets of an honest union with a beloved husband! . . . At the Tuileries Nicard had ices brought to us, but managed the business so adroitly that I thought the wood engraver had paid, and he thought that I had. We reached home at about ten o'clock with good appetites. There was plenty of food left, and we promised ourselves a delicious supper. But at the door, Adélaïde said to me: "I cannot pass the night away from my mistress's house without risk of disgrace, so I must go home." "No, dear friend, adorable friend! . . ." "But what will you say to her?" "That my wife has hurt herself, that she is not well. Leave it to me." She understood, and I made the journey as quickly as an English runner; Adélaïde noted the time, and I was only away ten minutes by her watch.

I returned to find everyone in raptures; our apartment had been refurnished! There was a mirror on the chimney piece, a side-board with a second glass upon it and a marble top as well as our old one, a fine armchair upholstered in velvet, some cane chairs, a pretty canopy with a gilt top and, beneath it, twin beds in wooden frames furnished with excellent bedding and crimson damask coverlets. . . . "Who has brought in all this during your absence?" I was asked. "She who holds the key, no doubt." "That's it! That's it!" And we looked at Nicard. . . . "I ordered a little furniture the better to welcome you, Monsieur and Mademoiselle; but you know what workmen are: they have done as much as they could so as not to lose their time!" We sat down to table; there were two more bottles of wine. I pressed my knee against Adélaïde's. "So Madame Brocard allows . . ." "Our friend to stay with us," I interposed quickly. "The reason was so legitimate." "I would not have risked a refusal," said Agnès, with that touch of malice which is rarely quite absent from an Auxerroise. "Ah, you are too sensitive!" exclaimed the wood engraver, kissing her hand. But seeing that her friend, of whom she still had need and who had just made her such a fine present, was looking down with a serious expression, she added: "I would have stayed without saying anything: for if Madame had refused, or sister Margot had come back with her brother, where should we have been?" I shuddered at this last possibility, which had never occurred to me. . . . Adélaïde noticed this, and said: "You managed things so well that you deserve to be thanked. She is ungrateful." With these and similar remarks we made a delicious supper, and no one was ever happier than I was in our make-believe. Agnès, who could never be completely happy unless she was spiting somebody, left our fine crimson curtains open, because she had caught sight of Chéreau, with his wife and Johnson, examining us from a third-floor window. When she thought they had seen enough, she ran to close them, exclaiming in a loud voice: "Why must people be so curious about poor folk?" And I heard Mme Chéreau say: "Ah, so that is what annoyed her!"

In the meantime the wood engraver, being much attracted by Agnès, whom he still thought was Adélaïde, made a serious declaration of love. He expressed himself envious of my happiness in sleeping, if not with her, at least so close to her! "He knew what he was about when he was in such a hurry to get permission for you to stay. He only did it for his own sake, because he wanted to secure a happy night!" It was midnight when we finished supper, and Beugnet, who was an ill-mannered fellow, hugged us all round and insisted on seeing us in bed. We feared he must have suspected something and, on a sign from Agnès, Nicard got tremblingly into the bed where I was already lying, for I had to get up early. Never was so voluptuous a sensation! I clasped her fair body in my arms, from which she sought to escape, even within those narrow confines, by making herself small and shrinking into herself. . . . Agnès had taken her new admirer downstairs, and we could hear her talking to the wine merchant. I was in position, and entered the sanctuary without needing to move. "My friend, you will ruin me!" she sighed. I reassured her with the distant sound of Agnès's voice. . . . What bliss! And how I blessed the wood engraver, against whose jests and lack of breeding I had just been fuming! At last I heard Agnès coming upstairs. Nicard was too much moved to do anything, but I slipped quickly into the other bed and pretended to be on the point of sleep when Agnès joined us. "Oh, so he is the first to try the beds!" "I got out of mine directly your back was turned, to prevent Adélaïde from putting her pretty little trotters on the ground as she was going to do." "Good!" "Always kind and ready," whispered Adélaïde. Agnès, who was undressing, overheard this remark: "And who would not be so with you, sweet friend?" she said, and overwhelmed her with thanks for our furniture. I begged her to let us sleep, pointing out that she was tiring our young friend. She flew into a rage: "Oh, you are naturally ungrateful!" she exclaimed. "I be silent! . . ." It needed all dear Nicard's sweet eloquence to soothe her passion; she went on weeping and plaguing us. . . . At last she fell asleep beside our young friend.

Next day I rose at six, so as not to lose half a day's wages by being a quarter of an hour late at work. Nicard heard me, and got up at the same time, leaving Agnès wrapped in a profound sleep. I took good care not to venture on a single caress, for the wily Auxerroise might only be feigning sleep. Nicard left with me, and I expressed my desire to be her escort, while admitting that I was pressed for time. "No, I will be your escort," she answered, "for we have much to say to each other. And firstly that you are most unfortunate! . . ." "Ah, I know it!" "Then we will not talk about it, dear friend! . . ." I kissed her hand: "So that is how you punish an insolent fellow, who . . ." I began. "Were you going to behave like *her*? Dear friend, I am not going to conceal anything from you: *he* has no child by his wife, and is very vexed that I have not given him one; but I think it is his fault. You know what my mother is; she wanted to get me one elsewhere, but I would rather die. . . . I knew you and my thoughts turned to you. . . ." We were alone and she kissed me. . . . "My friend, you have saved me the shame . . . of asking for something . . . that a woman cannot ask without . . . having lost all shame. . . . I owe you my peace of mind, my innocence, and a settled future; for if my mother once knew that I had fallen I should have no protection against her designs. . . ." We had reached the Louvre, and I said to Adélaïde: "Charming friend, I have listened to you with delight, but I have not uttered a single word of all that I have to say to you. I will let the foreman see me, and then come down again and take you home." I went in, was seen and spoken to, and left immediately. I gave my arm to Adélaïde, and began: "Your trust, sweet friend, fills me with as much gratitude and esteem as does your noble and great-hearted generosity, which, alas, will not have the result that you expect. *She* will sell the things in time, and meanwhile they will enable her to entertain her gallants, whom so far she has not admitted owing to the poverty of our furnishing." "Friend, you horrify me!" "I tell but the melancholy truth." "Be firm; do not let her rob you." We reached our destination at seven o'clock; I handed her over to her mistress, and fled without listening to the latter's enquiries for my wife. Nicard excused me on the grounds of work. . . .

Beugnet wooed the shameless Agnès for three weeks, at the end of which time he found out the truth from Séry, the apprentice who had taken over my work for Parangon. The wood engraver was very angry with me for being his mistress's husband, but certainly no less so than I was with myself.

My sweet intimacy with Adélaïde had suspended the consciousness of my misfortunes; but she became pregnant, and thereafter had to observe the greatest circumspection so as not to give offence to the President who had become more jealous than ever. But not yet did we say our affecting farewells, and it was Agnès's malice that forced us to part in the end. Let us pass on to intermediate events.

Being obliged to avoid Adélaïde, who, for her part, no longer visited us lest the conduct of Agnès Lebègue should do her harm in the President's estimation, I took a fancy to see Bathilde again. It was the beginning of 1764. I was walking towards her door one evening when I noticed a coffin covered with a white pall under the gateway of Les Américains. I passed by and thirty paces farther on, opposite the Rue de Grenelle, I caught sight of Bathilde at the window of her friend La Catiche, a pawnbroker and bawd. She beckoned to me and I hastened to her. I felt more pleasure than I could have believed at seeing this girl again; her conversation brought back agreeable memories. She made none of her usual proposals, but begged me, if I had the time, to teach her to read and write, as she had attracted the attention of a German who seemed in easy circumstances. I consented. She had the delicacy not to wish me to come to that house, so we had our lessons in a private apartment which La Catiche owned, on the second floor of the house at the corner of the *Rue du Petit Reposoir* and the *Rue des Vieux Augustins*, near the *Place des Victoires*. Bathilde gave me certain presents, which I was obliged to accept on account of my poverty. I used to leave the Imprimerie Royale, just as I was in my waistcoat, at mid-day and teach her until one o'clock. But I attracted the attention of two of my fellow workmen, Hymette and Datté, bad characters both, and they spread it abroad that I was visiting the "girls." These rumours reached the ears of Agnès Lebègue through Mme Mauger, the wife of another printer, and my life was poisoned. The shameless Agnès Lebègue overstepped all bounds, and my dear Nicard's furniture served to turn our home into a brothel; she even sold some of it, or let it be stolen. I was away all day, as she would not let me return for dinner; I saw nothing. . . . I put up with my troubles, because I am easy tempered, and because I was really attached to my Alsatian; not only as a beautiful woman, but for the sake of our old friendship and the manner in which I had come to know her. This attachment was fostered by our daily readings out of my note books; I took these to the press, and we read them day by day and were soon coming across people whom she knew. Thus every day we kept an anniversary; because if the day's date did not occur in one year, we soon found it in another. I put myself back into my old life, and would tearfully relate the story of Mme Parangon, or of Madelon Baron; or of Colombe, Tiennette and Toinette; or of Marianne Tangis; or of Zéphire, Suadèle, Zoé, Omphale, Sophronie, and Nicard! Tears streamed down my cheeks while I was speaking of the last named, because she was still with me and could have made me happy had I been free, and because she had made me a father. . . . But it was the story of Zéphire, whom she had almost known, which touched Bathilde most, and I would weep upon her breast, and she would weep with me. . . .

Agnès Lebègue had quarrelled completely with my dear Nicard, because the latter despised her Beugnet. The last time we all met together in my lodging, I still called Adélaïde *my wife*, although the wood engraver knew the truth. Beugnet was making love, and Nicard, seeing that the cooking was being neglected, went to look after it. She looked ravishing at this early stage in her pregnancy. I told her as much, and seeing that the other couple were deeply engaged, I laid her on the bed in the alcove. She uttered a little cry. . . . "What is the matter?" they asked. "I have burned myself," she answered. . . . "She is always burning herself," remarked Beugnet. They stayed quietly where they were, but if they had come in upon us I should not have let Nicard go. For, when I returned from fetching her, Zède Vilpois, our neighbour on the same floor, had stopped us and taken us into her apartment; but I had my suspicions and was on the alert, and saw her villainous father come out of my apartment doing up his trousers. I entered quietly: Agnès was tidying the bed and afterwards she washed. . . . I returned to fetch Nicard without having been seen. After Beugnet had arrived, I told the whole story to my indignant friend, and if Agnès and Beugnet had caught us, I should have described crudely everything that I had seen. . . . But, having had my revenge, I thought no more of the matter.

I tried to prevent Adélaïde from going out alone, suspecting that she meant to enrich our meagre fare. "It is our good-bye dinner," she said. "Let me do it." I was obliged to yield, for I was penniless. We had a fat goose and fish stew, followed by pears and grapes for dessert. It was All Saints' Day. As we re-entered the house, I said to Nicard: "Walk quietly, and let us hear what they are saying." We reached my door without a sound. No one in the room! Not a word! But a turmoil as though a dog were covering a bitch! . . . Adélaïde went in, and caught sight of them out of the corner of her eye. She made them a sign that I was coming upstairs, and running out to meet me, asked me in a low voice to fetch some wine. I ran down noisily; so they had time to tidy themselves, and I found them talking quietly together behind a window curtain. . . . The celestial Nicard laid the table, and I watched her with an adoration which flattered her. "You really do love me," she whispered; "since you look at me like that . . . after . . ."

This dinner was as delicious as the other one, but there was no walk after it. At five o'clock I escorted Adélaïde to her room, which was in the street where I went to teach Bathilde to read. I did not venture to possess her, because of a sign she made me with her eyes. . . . Then she spoke as follows: "My friend, you are very dear to me, but I will never see your wife again, because of her infamous behaviour with that old and disgusting wine merchant. I could almost have forgiven her Beugnet if he had been the only one; but such a monster! What can be the reason? . . ." "I will tell you to-morrow at Madame Brocard's," I answered. "I am sure she has the receipt for the quarter's rent and all the money I have given her: I will look in her pockets to-night." "Leave me now, my friend, on account of the President; for it is half-past five. But come to dinner with me every Sunday." I withdrew at once, and went to see Bathilde.

She was waiting for me, as she no longer practised her profession. I told her how I had spent my day, and she kissed me, saying: "I congratulate you, my friend. That is the woman who should have made you happy; your Nicard is your real wife, and not the drab you married in a moment of madness." Then she told me that she was on the point of leaving Paris, as her German, who was a baron, had told her that he could not do without her, and that she must come with him to his castle. . . . "But," she added, "first I want to hear what you think, because you are the only friend I have in the world, and I will do nothing of which you disapprove!" "God forbid that I should advise you to remain in your present profession!" I answered. "If you have the chance of becoming something liker to an honest woman you must seize it. I shall lose a friend in losing you, but I should be devoured by remorse if I counselled you to remain!" "Then we must part," she said with tears in her eyes, "for I was only waiting for your advice before deciding: everything is settled as far as the baron is concerned. Farewell, my friend, and as you have decided me, you have a right to know that I go to-morrow. . . . A word, and I stop; speak if you want me to. I make only one condition: that you leave a wife who is unworthy of you, and live with me; I will take Madame Dupont's shop in the *Deux Foires*, without however practising all her trade. I have an income of a thousand écus, and we could live honestly and happily together." "Ah, my friend, now I see how sincere you are! If I were a bachelor I would ask you at once to marry me; but to make you the concubine of an unfortunate man . . . a mark for all the arrows of a spiteful fury! No, no! I will not, must not do it! . . . I have no fortune, no resources, no position, no merit, no influence; I could not help you in the slightest degree if you had need of me. . . . Let us part, dear Bathilde. It is true that I have always come to you with pleasure, but for some time past I have never left you without a feeling of anguish which rends my heart! By your going I shall lose the only pleasure which remains to me in the world; but I shall also be delivered from a cruel pain!" "Ah," she exclaimed, "why am I not rich? . . . Then I would stay in Paris. . . . I will go to-morrow. . . . But I feel it will be with great grief!" We heard the German's carriage at the door. . . . Bathilde threw her arms passionately about my neck, saying: "Then it is your wish?" "Yes!" "Farewell! Perhaps for ever! . . ." I left her . . . and I have never seen her again . . . and only once have I had news of her. One of her friends, a tall blonde, assured me that she had married the German Baron. Was she telling the truth? . . .

Bathilde's departure left a cruel void, which was shortly to be much intensified. I was counting upon Nicard. I went to dinner with her on the following Sunday and was very happy, for I was first feasted and then enjoyed a pretty woman whom I loved. I told her about Bathilde, and she regretted never having known her. . . . I left my friend at six o'clock, driven away by the fear lest the President should come. I went home, never expecting to find Agnès Lebègue there; I supposed she was with Beugnet. Not in the least! She had been alone all the afternoon as the wood engraver was busy elsewhere, and she made a terrible scene. Apparently she knew where I had been, for she reproached me with it, and uttered threats which I did not at the moment understand. . . . I went to bed before eight o'clock. Beugnet arrived later and took Agnès out. She did not come back until after midnight.

On the following Sunday Agnès asked whether she was to put the pot-au-feu ready for me to cook, as she was going out and would not be back till evening. I answered that I would go out too, and perhaps dine with my sister in the *Faubourg Antoine*. When she departed I noticed Beugnet waiting for her at the door, and I looked forward to an enjoyable day. Sure of being unobserved, I walked as far as the Pont de la Tournelle, and then, instead of continuing to the Faubourg as I had at first intended, to avoid a lie, I followed the Port-au-Blé to the Pont Neuf. Thus I threw my two spies off the track, as they followed on to the Faubourg whither I had not gone. They stationed themselves in a wine shop within sight of my sister's house, and remained there from ten o'clock till three, when hunger drove Beugnet out to buy a twelve-sou pie from my brother-in-law. I was nowhere to be seen, so Beugnet asked Beaucousin if I had called. As a matter of principle Beaucousin never satisfied a stranger's curiosity about someone whom he knew, so he answered that I had left, and taken the alley opposite which leads from the *Rue Charenton* to the *Grand'rue Antoine*. Beugnet was satisfied, added some biscuits and a loaf to the pie, and proceeded to have dinner with Agnès Lebègue.

And what was I doing in the meantime? I was happy. . . . I was with

Nicard by half-past eleven, just as she had finished her toilet and was about to put on her dress. Her shoes were on and her hair was dressed, but she was still in her corset with her lily-white bosom exposed. And in this voluptuous costume I possessed her . . . more than once. . . . How we loved! . . . We did not have dinner alone, as she had invited a hairdresser to join us at two o'clock – fortunately! . . . I was agreeably surprised when this Mlle *Désirée Didier* entered, for she was a pretty girl. The meal was a merry one, and lasted until nearly five o'clock. . . . We had just left the table and were standing by the fire, when there was a gentle knock on the door. Adélaïde turned pale. "Support me in everything I say!" she whispered to Désirée, putting the latter's hand in mine. Then she ran and opened the door, saying: "You knocked so softly that I thought I must have been mistaken. . . . It is Monsieur le Président," she added, turning to us, and then to him: "This is my amiable hairdresser and her future husband, who have just been dining with me. They have business to do, and were just leaving as you knocked." This gave us our cue, and we left at once. I gave Désirée my arm, and luckily took the Rue du Petit-Reposoir; La Catiche was at her door and asked me to come in for a word about Bathilde. At the very same moment I caught sight of Beugnet and my wife at the other end of the street, and flung myself into the passage, dragging Désirée after me. She followed me readily, as she did not know La Catiche for what she was. Thus I escaped being seen. . . . I found out later that Agnès Lebègue had told the President of my affair with Nicard, and had persuaded him to take us by surprise this Sunday, etc. She called on Nicard, thinking to enjoy our discomfiture, and found the girl alone, as the President had concealed himself to overhear the conversation. Compliments were exchanged, but not a word was said about me, save when

Nicard herself enquired after me. "He dined in the Faubourg Antoine to-day," answered Agnès, and this must have seemed curious to the President. The visit was a short one.

"That's a tricky customer," remarked the President after she had gone, and he related what he described as her lies. Adélaïde was as much frightened as indignant. She gave me an appointment for the following Sunday through Désirée, at that pretty hairdresser's house in the Rue du Plâtre, for she wanted to entertain us once more at dinner and say farewell. . . . I went there by roundabout ways and little-known alleys, through which none could keep track of me, and reached my destination at one o'clock. Nicard had already arrived, and dinner was ready. There were only to have been the three of us, but a M. de Roncy, a troublesome lover of Désirée's with whom Adélaïde was acquainted, called and was asked to join us. Fortunately he went away directly the meal was finished, having satisfied himself that I was not present on his mistress's account. Directly he had left, Nicard said to me: "We must part now the President has been warned! He is naturally jealous and is on the watch; and if this party were repeated he would catch us. Our only salvation is to stop meeting altogether. If you were a bachelor it would be another matter. . . . My dear Désirée, my friend, I know your warm heart, and commend my friend and yours to you. Comfort him for my loss by receiving him every Sunday. Give him news of me; repeat our conversations to him, and tell me about yours. Two cruel enemies prevent us from seeing each other, but you will unite us in the spirit! When you relate my trials to him, ease his grief with your charming smile, and you will ease mine for his in the same way! . . . And you, my friend, whom I may never see again but whom I will never forget, open your heart to Désirée! Say to her all those tender things you would have said to me, and she will repeat them; they will seem to come from your lips, and I will seal them with a kiss – so, and you will have made love to me!" Désirée capped this peroration with a charming smile, and a kiss on Nicard's lips, followed by one on mine. Then she went out, doubtless through a previous arrangement with Adélaïde, and . . . I possessed my friend . . . for the last time! . . . When Désirée came back, Nicard held me a moment to her breast with tears in her eyes; then went away alone. I followed her at a distance. . . .

Such was our farewell, and such also the origin of my intimacy with pretty Désirée, whose kindness often mitigated my tribulations. She was the godmother of my wife's second daughter, by Johnson or Beugnet, I do not know which, and gave her one of her own names, Élise: the child was lame and died at the age of seven. I often used to visit Désirée to hear news of Nicard, who was brought to bed of a daughter on the 12th of March, 1763. Désirée's reception of me varied: sometimes she would seem constrained, at other times she was charming. I thought she was capricious and did not know where I stood; and, as the unfortunate are always diffident, my visits became rarer. Finally I discovered that de Roncy had offered to marry her, and that she was embarrassed when I arrived at the hour when he was due.

Besides de Roncy there was a certain M. Lefort, an author-compiler, who was Désirée's neighbour and jealous of her, although he was a broken-down old man. Désirée treated him with respect. He had been her mother's friend, and had promised to dower her with all his property on condition that she accorded him the charm of her society in the mornings and evenings; in the interval he was out, as he always dined in town. The old man was most friendly to me. He was an ardent partisan of *Quinault*, and marked all the finest tirades in my copy of that author. He was in love with Désirée and very jealous of her future husband, M. de Roncy, but not of me; he liked to see me caress her, as we shall hear.

One day I happened to call on Désirée late, but though it was quite dark she had no light. She received me kindly and when we were in her room, which was next door to M. Lefort's, we began to talk about our excellent friend Mlle Nicard, and I charged the fair Désirée to convey my fond caresses to her according to our agreement. These were ardent and respectful, delivered upon my knees with my arms about her. When I came to kiss her, her pretty mouth did not avoid mine, and stirred by this favour, I overturned her, sought happiness and found it. . . . While we were thus engaged I noticed several times that the fair brunette jerked herself about in an extraordinary fashion, and attributed this to temperament. I was drunk with the joy of possessing so pretty a person, I, so poor! . . . After some hours spent in voluptuous delights, she said suddenly: "I am forgetting myself! It is late! Go at once!" Then I noticed with amazement that she was wearing no shoes; her pretty slippers were standing on a little stairway. "Ah, I cannot convey that to dear Adélaïde!" she exclaimed with a sigh. "Yes, tell her about it, sweet friend. But that does not come well from my lips." I was just going when she caught hold of me: "If you see anyone on the stairway, say, as though talking to yourself: 'My God, what shall I do!'"

And, as a matter of fact, I had only taken a few steps before I noticed a man hidden on the stairway. I feigned the greatest distress as I went down, uttering the words Désirée had suggested, and left the house, sighing.

Next day Désirée came to see Agnès Lebègue and myself, and gave us a present of two louis; then she said to me privately: "M. de Roncy was so touched by my picture of your distress that he gave me this money to lend to you. . . ." We accepted the two louis and did not repay them: it was Mlle Nicard who paid my debt. But Désirée had already told me they were really a gift and only to be called a loan for Agnès's benefit.

I had other distractions from my troubles; one always has in youth, it is in old age that we are left destitute! Of our two neighbours, Zède Vilpois, daughter of the principal tenant, and Javotte Prudhomme, daughter of a lithographer on the third floor, the former already had a lover, and the latter was plain and heavily pock-marked, but young and with a beautiful bosom; so I would caress her sometimes in my wife's absence. Nothing is more approachable than a Paris girl, and I am convinced that without the greatest watchfulness on the part of mothers in easy circumstances, not one of these would reach the altar intact. . . . Javotte Prudhomme, although a virgin as far as I could judge, made fewer difficulties than any girl I had ever met in the Provinces.

A pupil of Désirée was even less niggardly of her favours. One Sunday morning when I was very late in bed, this Mlle Edmet slipped through the curtains that screened our alcove. My wife was busy about the room. I took a decisive liberty. She offered not the least resistance, and I was on the point of ravishing the ultimate favour when Désirée came in, and little Edmet was obliged to leave me.

Next day the little pupil, knowing that my wife was dining with Désirée, joined me at mid-day and shared my repast of bad beans and water. "A poor entertainment!" I exclaimed; but the child threw herself into my arms and was well satisfied with the triple recompense bestowed by love.

Thus, in the depths of poverty, I became less delicate and less virtuous than if I had been rich, and for the singular reason that all women were above me! I coveted them as it is natural to covet what is difficult to attain; and found a more delicious pleasure in them than would a king to whom all yield, than whom all are lower.

We have seen how the generous Nicard paid my debt to Désirée, and how Désirée herself would not take back her present. But I had still to become acquainted with another type of woman. The most shameless and salacious of the kept women whom I came to know at this time was a Mlle *Talon*; she was the paid mistress of a parliamentary clerk, M. *Pidansat*, and herself kept a lover in the person of B. . . . , the spoilt son-in-law of the printer *la Musique's* widow. Mlle Talon had two sisters; one was Mme Desvignes, a magnificent-looking woman who had left the profession to marry a clock-maker, and the other was a plain woman who acted as go-between for her two sisters. (Somewhat as in the Vestris family, in which the first was the *God of the Dance*, the second played the leading parts at the Comédie Italienne, and the third did the cooking.) . . . The three sisters shared a very charming friend, called Chouchou, or, more usually, Petite-Brulée, from the name of her lover, a rich doctor, very much the rake and man of the world. . . . Talon's windows on the Rue de la Harpe were opposite ours; we made her acquaintance and exchanged visits. She asked Agnès Lebègue to make some hats for her, and by praising bad work procured her the custom of her sister Desvignes and of little Brulée. All three women were charming in appearance, and Chouchou in character as well. I regarded her as another Nicard.

One Sunday I saw Chouchou sitting at Mlle Talon's window, apparently intent on fondling a cat. I stood admiring her. Noticing this, she became more caressing, with apparent satisfaction to herself. Then Mlle

Talon called to me and I ran down quickly, to find her on the stairway. "I am going to your apartment," she said. "Brulée is waiting for you. Don't play the ninny; her man is used up and she has a good appetite. I will keep your wife busy."

I entered in a state of great emotion! "O lucky cat!" I said to Brulée. "Him?" she said, throwing the animal to the ground. "I do not waste my caresses on him; he can neither accept nor return." I had come close to her, and I kissed her gloved hand. She took off the glove at once and held out her hand to me. I pressed it; I put an arm about her waist, and she leaned languishingly against me. I rummaged the lilies of her breasts and . . . there was nothing I did not do. . . . She was satisfied, and remarked during an interact: "Ah, my friend, you accept . . . and you return! . . ." She displayed the most ardent affection. . . . We were at our games for more than two hours; then Mlle Talon called her, and this was the signal for my departure.

I found Talon on our staircase. "Well?" she said. "Your friend will tell you all about it." "I will run up to her, for I am curious." I sat down at our window, and thence received the silent congratulations of the two beauties. . . . One of my pockets felt heavy and, on exploring it, I discovered a weighty little package. It contained five louis. My glances expressed my gratitude to pretty Brulée, my second Nicard.

One evening, during the same week, Talon came to see us at nine o'clock. She teased me into playing with her, and while my wife was finishing a bonnet for her, she fled behind our alcove curtains and out again, and so two or three times, until finally she whispered: "A thrust! A thrust!" I accepted the challenge and triumphed, while pretending all the time to be still chasing her round the bed. . . . She enjoyed this game so much that she revisited us several times, and also would often send me to keep sweet Brulée company.

One day her sister Desvignes, the watchmaker's wife, came to see her. She was a plump, appetising woman, and I was gazing at her with obvious pleasure, when her sister beckoned to me. I hurried across to them and Talon came out to meet me. "My sister has a poor sort of husband, and she is dutiful! I have praised you up. . . . Tumble her a little for me. . . ." I found the fair Desvignes lying on the sofa, her neckerchief cast aside. I kissed her. "Get to it, lawyer!"* said Talon. So I got to it and took what was offered. . . .

I did not keep my useful Talon long. She made the acquaintance of M. Pidansat, a relative of the famous Mairobert; and he first took her as his mistress, and then married her. We never saw her afterwards, nor her sister, nor Brulée. But they had led me to neglect Nicard, who was a better person than they!

I lost my father on the 16th of December, 1763, and, for lack of means, I could not go to close this worthy man's eyes. Not till Lent, 1764, did I set out to visit my dear mother, taking only twelve francs for my journey and leaving only six at home. . . . I found all my brothers and brothers-in-law at Sacy, and my father's affairs were wound up in three weeks, rather unsatisfactorily than otherwise. I injured my leg there, while carrying my daughter Agnès, and returned lame to Paris. Agnès Lebègue had contracted debts in my absence which had to be paid on my arrival.

It was at this time that I lost Nicard. During my absence she came to my lodging for advice and, out of spite, Agnès Lebègue made Zède Vilpois tell her that she did not know what had become of me. She had wanted to

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*"Get to it, lawyer." A quotation from Racine's *Les Plaideurs.* [Ed.]

consult me about a marriage the President was arranging for her, but, thinking that I had left for foreign parts, she accepted his proposals, and I returned the day after the wedding. Agnès took a malicious pleasure in telling me about it. I managed to see my dear Nicard, and express my regrets. She was in despair. "Since the President is leaving me," she said sighing, "I would rather a hundred times have been your mistress than marry, for I know how honourable you are. . . ." She granted me her favours, as her husband had not been able to exercise his rights on the previous night. A perfidious mistress had given him gonorrhea when she heard he was going to marry, by persuading an infected girl to take her place in the middle of the night. The President had wanted to dally with her that morning, but she had said: "Keep away from me! Fortunately you had me the day before yesterday!" The President was very angry with her husband. . . . I do not know what might have been the outcome of this adventure: possibly Nicard and I would have made a home together with the President's consent, save for an incident which I am about to relate; but everything turned to my detriment.

I will not pause over passing adventures, such as were those with Bathilde's friend and colleague, tall *Laurence*, whom I mention in my Calendar; with fair *Vadé* and the four sisters *Decours*; with all the "girls" I visited, such as *Saint-Cyr, Victoire, Zoa, Françoise Bienfaite, Psyché, Rosette Préludine, Agacette,* etc. Nor over the villainous tricks I played on women, on the Mlles *Laurens*, for instance, who were cousins of that *Villedeuil* who has since become a minister, on *Dauvergne* the purse-maker, on *Agathe Lamesle, Helenette,* etc. Nor over the adventures which reawoke my heart, such as that with the adorable *Nazange.* Nor over my interlude with *Émilie Raunart*, my meeting with *Apolline Canapé*, my daughter, and with pretty *Percinette*, who put me in the way of possessing *Nannon Prévôt.** Nor over my childish amusements with Mlles *Autran* and *Romilly*, out of which some quite extraordinary adventures developed, the one with Mlle *Menyer*, for instance, and through which I came across some singular arrangements, such as that between the four *Mesliers*, the grandmother, the mother and the two daughters. Nor over my gallant intercourse with Mmes *Hollier, Mauviette, Saniez,* and *Inoboccir.*† Nor over the affairs in which I was seduced by a factitious taste, as with *La Rainefort*, otherwise called *La Tailleuse*, with Mme *Baptiste*, the lemonade seller opposite the Comédie Française, with Mme *Vingtcinq* of the Rue Dauphine and with *Hélène Brocard*, the daughter of my sister Margot's mistress. . . . All these were so many consolations for my unhappy marriage.

But I will describe the adventure, very different in kind from all the others, which finally estranged me from Mlle Nicard.

I have mentioned that I injured my leg at Sacy while carrying my daughter Agnès. It was a prelude to all the troubles this beautiful child was to cause me. . . . Balm of Arceus induced erysipelas, and I was obliged to keep my bed for a fortnight. During my convalescence a scene took place which embroiled me with the foreman of the Louvre. Agnès went out to see her gallant of the moment, a young surgeon of the name of Aubé, leaving me with no food. Near to fainting, I called a neighbour to my help; and the young widow (she was the mistress of that Henner who afterwards became a town councillor and has since been guillotined) made me some soup. Agnès, who was conscious of her fault, had the infernal malice to spend the evening with the foreman of the Louvre. She was kept to supper, and at ten o'clock in the evening she asked my friend Renaud, M. and

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*In 1755.

†Riccoboni [Ed.]

Mme Werkawin and their sister to bring her home. My neighbour, Mme Duflot, scolded my wife when she came in. What an uproar! This scene made my foreman, an acid little man, look askance at me; indeed, but for Renaud, I should have lost my place through Agnès Lebègue's misconduct, and I so poor at the time that she was selling the furniture given us by Nicard! . . . A wanton and thriftless wife is a formidable scourge! . . .

It was during my convalescence that, walking along the Rue Honoré one evening, after leaving work, on my way to visit Laurence and talk to her about Bathilde, my eyes were caught by the charming daughter of the silk merchant at the corner of the *Rue Traversière.* I was dazzled! . . . At the time I had neither virtue, soul, nor energy. . . . I madly abandoned myself to an insane passion. . . .

In the meanwhile, afraid of being dismissed by Werkawin, I mentioned my anxieties to certain printers at the Université, and among others to that Gonnet who worked at Auxerre and afterwards at Sens; and he, by singing my praises, secured me the position of foreman in the Quillau press, Rue du *Fouarre.* He told me the news with delight, for he loved me. I was offered eighteen livres a week, holidays or no holidays, together with a copy of every book printed; and this might be worth another three hundred livres.

I took up my position with F. A. Quillau about the 2nd of July, 1764, and at first I was completely occupied by my work. My earnings more or less covered our expenditure and there were no deductions to fear. Agnès Lebègue, who in the early days of our marriage had not been able to get work as a milliner, obtained it easily as the foreman's wife; so that we were both working. And this surely is what we should have continued to do in order to live in decent comfort. I fulfilled my duty as never Paris foreman did before me, and can bring five hundred witnesses to the fact. And it was necessary. F. A. Quillau was still a minor, and his business was to make. I made it a success by hard work and punctuality. During the three years of my administration I increased his instalment from four to twelve presses; and we were receiving offers of work from every side; but it nearly killed me. My digestion, enfeebled by hard work and bad feeding during my time at the Louvre, ceased to function, and I suffered cruelly with it for fifteen years. . . . But I was naturally so strong that I managed to keep up, and never missed a single day from work. At the same time I was devoting every moment that could be spared from the overwhelming task of supervising sixty-six workmen, to the composition of my first book, entitled *La Famille Vertueuse*, of which I shall be speaking shortly.

My work as foreman consisted: (1) in reading all first proofs; (2) in keeping an eye on the pressmen to see that they turned out good work; (3) in supervising and matching the type, preserving and renewing it; (4) in developing good taste in the compositors in the setting out of title pages and the arrangement of books; (5) in settling the men's wages and paying them on Saturday; (6) in keeping an eye on the men to see that they did not claim too much; in a word, in watching equally over the interests of the master and the journeymen; (7) in myself reading and correcting all final revises, that is to say, the last proof before a book goes to press and thence to the public, without being seen again by the author: the most important and most tiring of all a foreman's functions; (8) in doing the outside business. This should have been done by the *bourgeois* (owner), but Quillau gladly left it to me, in order to be free of the business save for a weekly glance at output and receipts; (9) in myself setting up any Greek which might occur in copy. To all this I added a careful supervision of the paper and its drying, and of the cleaning of the shops which I made the apprentices do under my personal supervision every Sunday and holiday. A printer is often obliged to work on Sunday; and on these occasions I myself helped the compositors, especially if the book was in Latin, as in the case of medical and university theses. When my work was completely finished, I did not immediately leave the place, as in the days when I was overwhelmed and discouraged by poverty at the Louvre; I shut myself up in the printing room and wrote letters to pretty women, which I then delivered myself. This was my only relaxation.

It had not yet occurred to me to turn author: this idea was born of the most inconsequent and most important adventure of my life; and one which illustrates more clearly perhaps than any other the compass of my adoration for the sex. We have seen how, while working at the Imprimerie Royale, I sank under the weight of poverty into a state of degradation and discouragement; how I then lost all my virtue and, surrounded as I was by wicked and despicable women (with the exception of Nicard and Désirée), I lost all consciousness of the divinity in woman. Yet now I was to rise with more energy than ever, through the inspiration of an adorable girl, whom I loved, as I loved Jeannette Rousseau, without ever speaking to her. . . . I repeat, this was the most amazing and extraordinary adventure of my life. I was dead to honour, to virtue, and to sentiment; I was vegetating like the brutes: I saw the fair Rose Bourgeois, and lo, I had a soul! . . . that same sensitive soul which had loved, adored and respected Mme Parangon. . . . Never despair of people who are alive, even if they be vicious; they have the right stuff in them: it is the passionless nonentity who can never be good for anything.

It will be remembered that I had injured my leg at Sacy; a short time after, I injured the other one through looking too attentively at the pretty silk merchant's daughter I have been speaking of. There was another daughter, and both the sisters were amiable girls, but the elder one, whom many people will still remember, was a masterpiece of beauty. She had the same type of face as Mme Parangon, the same in perfection and nobility. Walking down the Rue Honoré one Sunday, after I had begun work as a foreman, I met the mother and her two daughters in the little *Rue Contrescarpe*, on their way to the Palais Royal. Never had I seen anything so perfect as Rose Bourgeois; she was beautiful from head to foot, and my heart quickened with pleasure as I looked at her. I followed her as far as my business permitted, and she noticed me; I left her with regret, resolving often to go and admire her in the evening after the lights were lit, the hour at which I had seen her first on the day I hurt my leg.

I kept my resolution. It was the month of October. At first I visited the quarter once a week, but soon my passion, fed through the eyes and the imagination, grew so that I could not miss a single day; I would take up my stand at the corner of the Rue Traversière, then creep up to a window and gaze upon the charming idol of my worship. This mute passion grew to such a point that life became intolerable unless I could possess the fair Rose. I vexed and tormented myself, until finally it occurred to me that I could follow my usual custom and write. But how to deliver my letters? I wanted to write often, yet felt I could not endure one scornful glance, even if Rose took me for a porter. I wrote my first letter, but as I never made rough copies of these compositions I cannot quote it.* I took it with me the same evening; I approached near to the house, making good use of my quick eyes, which nothing escapes, to be certain that I could not be observed either from within or without; then, seizing a favourable moment, I

*See *Drame de la Vie*, p. 535 ff.

laid the letter in front of the fair Rose without anyone having noticed me. I had already retired to a safe distance, before the beautiful girl raised her eyes and saw my letter. She looked at it with an astonishment which increased on finding that it was addressed to her. Her younger sister, Eugénie, wanted to open it, but Rose refused to do so and took the letter to her father in the back shop. From what I could gather, M. Bourgeois read it aloud to his assembled family. Then the two girls returned to their places, and I had the pleasure of watching their frequent glances up and down the street in search of the author of the letter or his messenger. I went home, my cruel torments soothed merely by the thought: "She knows that a man adores her, and that she could make this poor wretch happy! She knows that he burns for her, and perhaps she pities this unknown lover." An extreme passion catches at a straw, for surely my reasons for taking comfort were very slight! But the modelling of Rose's face was the same as that of Mme Parangon's, and at first sight of her my surprise, my ecstasy, my – I know not what more strong than reason, made me oblivious to everything; all my faculties were in suspense, and at that moment a carriage could have run me down without my having power to avoid it.

I did not write next day, but I returned to her quarter. On the third day I wrote my second letter. I had noticed, the evening before, that everyone who approached the shop was attentively observed, so the greatest precaution was necessary in delivering it. But I achieved this without mishap, and witnessed Eugénie's joyful start, and Rose's blush when they first caught sight of the paper. They took it to their father, who read it and put it away as he had the former one. But now the two sisters, and especially Eugénie, kept their eyes so constantly on the street that at last they noticed me flattened against the wall at the angle of the Rue Saint-Honoré.

Eugénie pointed me out to Rose, but the latter scarcely raised her eyes. She looked very serious.

I did not write the next day or the day after: I could see that the whole household was in a flutter and, suspecting that some of the shop boys had been posted in the neighbourhood, I prowled around examining the scene of action. On the fourth day I arrived with my letter ready in my hand, walked quickly by the shop and dropped it on the counter as I passed. I did not stop the fraction of a second, so that the sentinel never saw me. I walked on for about fifty paces, and when I came back my letter had not yet been noticed, as it lay in the shadow of fair Rose's embroidery frame; it was the boy who finally discovered it when he came in again. He was dumbfounded! I noticed, not without a strong desire to laugh, that he stared up at the ceiling to see if it could have dropped from there. It was taken to M. Bourgeois. I remember that I said in it that it was useless to watch for me as I was invisible, and I gathered that Eugénie, who had been hidden in the entry of a hat shop opposite, accepted my statement literally; for she made a speech with much gesticulation, in which, it seemed to me, she was emphasising whatever was marvellous in the business.

At first the pleasure of writing to the fair Rose solaced me, but I soon perceived that love resembles thirst, which a drop of water but increases; my infatuation grew, and with it my unhappiness. I stopped writing for a week; reason warned me I could do no less, and in the meantime they partially forgot me. All three boys were to be seen in the back shop, and Rose was alone at her place. I delivered my next letter without being perceived, and it was Eugénie who found it and examined it with every evidence of joy. Their mother opened it as M. Bourgeois was absent, and I noticed that Rose did not miss the reading of it.

Next day I arrived with my fifth letter. The first time I walked quickly past, Rose looked up and I could not get rid of it; nor could I tell whether she recognised me. I finally delivered it towards closing time, while the boy was occupied in putting up the shutters. The two sisters had then left their place, and were moving to and fro between the shop and the parlour; again it was Eugénie who found it, and I heard her exclaim: "Look! It must have been there a long time!" I could not watch it being read because the shop shut, and I did not then know that there was a low window on the Rue Traversière, through which I could watch my fair Rose at table.

I had a sixth letter with me on the following day, but business kept me late and when I arrived the shop was shut. I made a tour of the house, and at last discovered the low window; the curtains did not quite meet, so I was able to see my beautiful Rose at supper. Also, by pressing my ear to the window pane, I could catch something of what was said. "He has not appeared to-day," said Eugénie, and realising that the little imp knew me by sight, I resolved to be more circumspect. While I was engaged in eavesdropping the cook opened a door, which I perceived to be the back entrance to the house; she left it ajar while she went to a grocer's shop on the opposite corner, and I slipped through it. The parlour door was only pushed to, and with a little care I managed to deposit my letter on a chair near to it. Then I withdrew a few paces from the house. The cook returned, shut the door, and I went back to my window; if anyone passed, I pretended to be satisfying a lesser need. My letter was not discovered until Rose got up to fetch the salad; she looked at it without speaking, but her sister, following the direction of her eyes, went to the chair and uttered a cry of joy so loud that I could hear it. Father and mother showed the greatest amazement. The cook was summoned and interrogated and, as she was obviously defending herself, presumably they suspected her of having delivered the letter. However she must have cleared herself without difficulty, for she left the room laughing. One of the shop boys left the table. I withdrew immediately for fear of being caught, and very wisely! For he opened the back door quietly, cautiously poked out his head, and then came into the street. I went home.

Next day I returned with my seventh letter which I meant to drop as I raced past; it was early and I had business. The cook was on the shop step; I watched her from afar, advancing steadily; she turned her back for a moment, thus concealing me from the two sisters, and my letter lay before Rose. I returned quickly on the other side of the road and saw the cook looking very red and embarrassed; apparently she was again under suspicion. My letter was read, and there was a long colloquy between the mistress of the house, her family and the cook. The shop shut, and I went round to the parlour window and saw my letter in fair Rose's hands. Also I heard Eugénie saying: "But, good gracious, who is this man! He certainly adores you, sister, and I vow if it was I, I should be flattered." I could not see whether Mlle Rose made any reply.

For a fortnight I did not write, but I passed the house every evening to catch a momentary glimpse of Rose. At first everyone was on the look out for me, but they relaxed their vigilance on the twelfth day. My eighth letter was written on the fourteenth day and I composed some verses to enclose with it;* but, arriving too late, I had to keep it for the morrow. Eugénie was alone. I approached until I was quite close to her, her thread broke and I chose that moment to drop my letters (for I delivered my verses, or ninth letter, with the eighth). I had hardly put the packet down before she saw it, but she did not see me. She called the cook and said to her (or so I inferred): "Any way you can have had nothing to do with this." She left the letter in front of her until her parents and sister returned, and when her mother caught sight of it, she exclaimed: "What, another!" and they retired to the parlour to read it. The whole place was in a commotion; the three boys were sent out to scout round and about the house, while I watched at a distance from the *Rue de l'Échelle.* Finally they retired indoors again, the shop was shut, and I went round to the parlour window; but fortunately, before stopping, I looked about me and so caught sight of the cook at a staircase window on the first floor. I passed on and saw nothing more that evening.

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*See *Drame de la Vie,* p. 543.

Two days later I arrived with my tenth letter. The two sisters were at their place, and the three boys inside the shop; but I caught sight of the cook at the little staircase window and inferred that she had suspected me, as she promptly vanished. The disturbance she caused by summoning the boys gave me an instant in which to drop my letter. Convinced that I was marked down, I passed on immediately and went back home.

On the following day I indited a letter even more tender than the others. (It must not be thought that these letters took much time; the longest did not keep me more than a quarter of an hour.) In it I boasted of *my invisibility – and asserted that it was impossible to see me, as I was a Sylph passionately enamoured of the beautiful Rose.* My problem was to deliver this eleventh letter with everyone on the look out for me. However, I perceived that I was not expected that day and everyone was occupied with his business. So, after a quick glance round, I laid my letter in front of Rose, and then retired to the Rue de l'Échelle, fearing to be caught if I hid in the corner by the hat-shop. From there I saw Rose pick up my letter, and herself come to the door with Eugénie, where they stayed for about five minutes before going indoors. All three boys came out while it was being read, and took up positions about the house, so that I was obliged to return by way of the Carrousel for fear of accident.

I composed my twelfth and last letter next day, and was in the quarter by five o'clock, just as the outside lamps were being lighted. I waited my opportunity to deliver the letter, wherein I described all the steps that had been taken to catch me on the evening before. After this I addressed Rose in the most flattering and expressive phrases; I prayed that she might be happy, while doubting if any man existed who was worthy of her. I ended by saying *that, as a Sylph, my nature did not permit me to possess her; therefore I was resolved to renounce my immortality and win from Destiny the right to love her as a man.* I took advantage of the half-light, and a block in the traffic which forced several people on to the shop step, and mingling with these, I deposited my letter. I slipped away immediately at the risk of being run over; and on repassing a few moments later saw my letter still in its place. It was found when the lights were lit, and M. Bourgeois, who was in the shop, read it. Rose listened with evident amazement, and Eugénie with a most comical bewilderment. I withdrew directly my letter had been put away.

It was about five days later that the catastrophe occurred. I visited the house every day, taking every care not to be observed. Finally, however, I wearied of caution, and one evening, finding a shop window on the Rue Traversière open, I stood there for some moments gazing at my beautiful Rose. I was drunk with this dangerous pleasure, when suddenly I felt myself seized by the collar. "Do not struggle, or we will call the Guard!" shouted my brave captors in chorus. "Have no fear," I answered, "I shall not struggle." I was taken into the back shop. The vegetable sellers of the quarter thought I was a robber at the very least, and a crowd surrounded the house. M. Bourgeois was not in, so I was questioned by the boys who held me, while the fair Rose and the lively Eugénie stood by the fireplace; the former was very red and kept her eyes lowered, the latter was all for me, and exclaimed over and over again: "I won't have him hurt!" The young puppies made me write, to see whether I was truly the author of the letters, and when I had done so, they said again and again: "We must take him to a Commissary." At last M. Bourgeois returned, and they said: "Here is the man!" He dismissed them with a gesture, and I was left alone in the parlour with him, his wife and his daughters.

"Did you write these letters?" (and he handed them to me). "Yes, Monsieur." "By what right do you try, without my consent, to waken an emotion in my daughter's heart, as dangerous as is love at her age?" "Do not ask me why, or by what right, Monsieur. I do not know. An imperious sentiment took possession of my heart and controlled my hand; my suffering was such that I sought to mitigate it. I did not know that it was possible to love so madly without speaking to the object of one's passion or being received by her or being acquainted with her merits; now I know better; I have had my lesson, and would not, perhaps, expose myself if all were to do again." "Young man, you express yourself with vehemence, and write with fire! You have a soul . . . but your conduct would be inexcusable were I less indulgent. . . . My dear . . . my children," he said to his wife and daughters, "leave us. . . ." (They all three left the parlour and went up to their apartments on the second floor, the first floor being the warehouse.) . . . Then this worthy man continued: "My dear friend, your letters and your way of answering are evidence of your ability: use your talents, for you have talent, and make yourself a name; and when you have something to your credit, come and see me again. For love can work miracles in you; your words prove that. To-day I ask no questions; and at our next interview, you will speak for yourself, without need of interrogation. My daughter is beautiful, and her character is even fairer than her face; if some day you should deserve her, why should you not have her? . . . Your future is in your own hands. Go now, but by this door so that the people do not see you." He opened the back door and shook me by the hand for the benefit of the fruiterers and fishwives; nor did he go indoors until he had seen me depart unmolested.

No sooner was I in safety than my first feeling was one of admiration for this excellent man! I blessed him from the bottom of my heart. But, great God, what a tempest of emotion rent me when I reflected that I could have won the beautiful Rose, Mme Parangon resuscitated, had I been free! . . . Then I realised that my only salvation lay in energy and fortitude and a change of habits! But all gates to distinction seemed closed to me, and I was in despair! However, a salutary discontent had been born in me, which restored my taste for work and gave me a contempt for amusements. But to return.

I went home, now lost in thought, now raging against myself and my precipitation in contracting an unprofitable marriage with the daughter of a bad woman, who had given my wife nothing and, having dissipated what my parents had given to me, beaten her in my absence to prevent her from telling me! I protest that I had meant to be a respectful and devoted son-in-law; it was Mme Lebègue herself who made it impossible; it was she herself who destroyed her daughter's reputation in Auxerre, and, in 1764, with my family also, by the contempt with which she treated her when Agnès went to my mother in September to be brought to bed of Marion, her fourth daughter. My wife was in Sacy when I fell in love with the fair Rose and I was boarding with a neighbour, that Mme Duflot whom I have already mentioned, together with three journeymen printers, *Henner*, a foreman for legal work, *Miller*, an engraver corrector, and *Desclassan* of Toulouse. . . . When I reached home, I felt the full horror of my lot. "Am I always to endure the tortures of Tantalus?" I said. "What evil demon haunts me, to turn aside good fortune and let the evil fall upon me?" . . . I could not sleep for a long time for the raging fury which possessed me. However, reason triumphed in the end, and, as I no longer dared to pass by Rose's house, I would choose other ways when business took me to that quarter. At last my suffering became less poignant and was transmuted into a deep and stimulating emotion. How to prove to the beautiful Rose that I was not unworthy of her, and to her father that I merited his favourable opinion? I reflected long upon this problem. . . .

The year 1765 was one of indescribable upheaval. Urged with increasing vehemence by the desire to win a place in Mlle Rose's thoughts, I sought on every side for means to distinguish myself. Thus have women always been the arbiters of my destiny: thus have they always determined my occupations and decided my fate! . . . How many times since M. Bourgeois and his daughters left their house have I not saluted it with these words: *"Salve, o domus, quæ me fecisti scriptorem! . . ."*

Here I will end this shameful epoch of my life, this period of spiritual death, of poverty and degradation. . . . I have been honest; I offer a book that is unique in the immensity of time: the life of a man detailed without concealment.

O heavenly and never to be forgotten Rose! You restored my energy, you cleansed me in my own eyes by offering me a vision of happiness, and yet more by the talisman of your resemblance to Mme Parangon! May you be for ever blessed, you and your sweet sister Eugénie with you! And if, as I have every reason to believe, you are both the grand-daughters of Rose Pombelins, pity me when you read this (for you are younger than I) and realise that my love was as vehement as it was involuntary. I can say with Mithridates:*

It is Destiny that bids my blood to burn for you!

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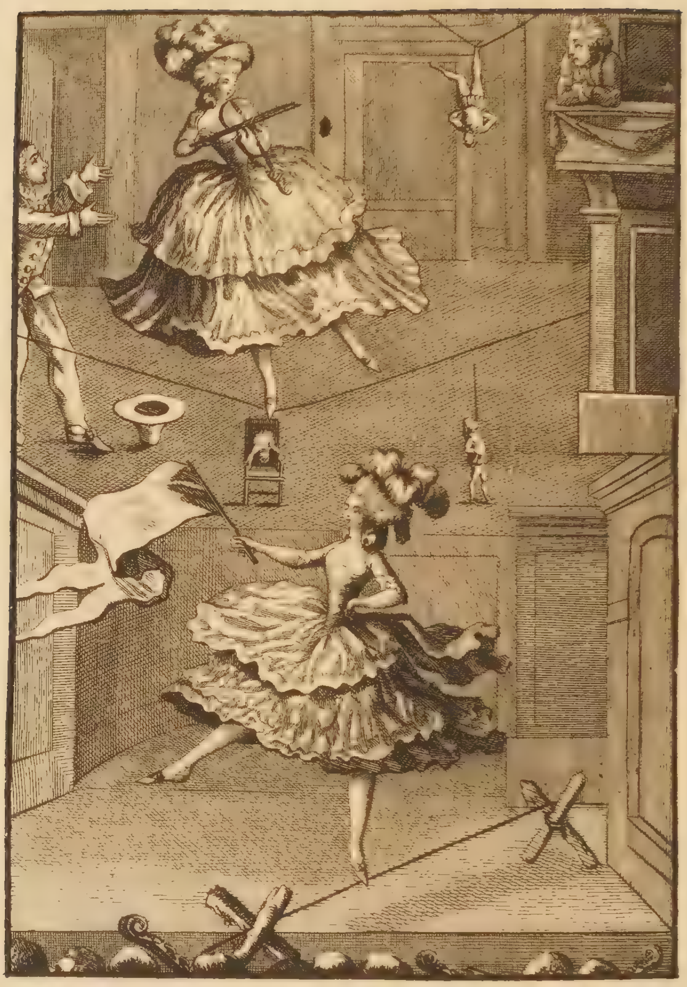
*A reference to Racine's *Mithridate*, in which sons fall in love with the Princess loved by their father. Restif's father, during his youth in Paris, had been in love with Rose Pombelins. [Ed.]

END OF THE SIXTH EPOCH

SEVENTH EPOCH

IN WHICH
I BECOME AN AUTHOR

1765-1775



SEVENTH EPOCH

In Which I Become an Author

1765-1775

> *Scribis ut oblectem studio lacrymabile tempus,*
> *Ne pereant turpi pectora nostra situ:*
> *Difficile est quod, amice, mones, quia carmina lætum*
> *Sunt opus, et pacem mentis habere volunt.*
> Ovid, *Trist.* El. 12, v, 1.

> *"You bid me write to charm away my griefs: to write a man must have peace of mind, some sort of comfort, no anxiety for daily needs, and sweet commerce in the intimacy of his home!" (Inestimable and necessary boons, which I have never enjoyed!)*

AGNÈS LEBÈGUE returned in the month of February 1765, bringing with her my eldest daughter to whom I grew much attached. She was a comfort to me. I saw no more of either M. Bourgeois or the fair Rose. . . . What can they have thought of me in those early days before I became known? And what opinion did they form of me when I began to make a name? . . . I do not know for certain, as I have never spoken to them again, but I can guess. . . . I had lost sight of Éléonore, who was under the control of the Comtesse d'Egmont; of my Edmée-Colette, who was presumably at Dijon with Mlle Omphale. These were the only two children whom I knew about at this time (a grocer had brought up another charming Éléonore for me, but I was not aware of her existence). Little Agnès stood for all of them. . . . Unlucky child! . . . But I must not anticipate. While at the Louvre I had only read our best authors, and they produced the same effect on me as regards prose as Racine had for verse; especially that mighty clown Voltaire, of whom *Royou* speaks as though he were a little boy; he seemed to me inimitable and so far beyond my compass that he stifled even the slightest inclination to write. At Quillau's I proof-read some books of Mme Riccoboni which Humblot was having printed. Her sustained elegance did not encourage me. Finally we were given one of the books of that Mme Benoit who is so famous in Lyons: *Élisabeth, A Novel* (such was the awkward title of this production). While reading the proofs, I kept on saying to myself: "But I could write a novel too!" All that I needed was a plot and some imagination, and these were forthcoming. One evening, walking under the Quai de Gèvres, I noticed a pretty girl buying something at a milliner's, and she gave me the idea for my *Léonore* in the *Famille Vertueuse.* Mlle Rose joined company with her, and next day I began a manuscript which was never finished, but which was the foundation of my first book a year later.

The difficulty I at first experienced in composition had two causes. In the first place I wanted to draw entirely on my imagination, to create everything. This was because I had been obliged to relinquish my first attempt at a book, my autobiography, seeing that an unknown man could hardly venture to publish facts of recent occurrence concerning persons who were still alive, for no other reason than to write about himself. The second cause was an effect of the first: in my efforts to invent, I often found myself with no foundation and, still worse, no inspiration; there was nothing to rouse or grip me. So the story of the Quai de Gèvres was never finished, and I got no further than the fragment which was later published in the *Femme Infidèle.*

It was quite otherwise with the *Famille Vertueuse*. In the first place I used the story of Henriette's visit to the fair pastrycook's, a house where I had once lived; this incident had been related to me by Bonne Sellier. Thus I had a foundation. To increase my interest in the story I introduced Rose as the friend of my Léonore, and also inserted an incident analogous to my epistolary adventure with the two sisters, in the anecdote about Mounk's daughters. I had actually seen something comparable to the Adèle incident, and finally, a very interesting adventure had been narrated to me, of which the story of Llamas is a disguised version. This Jesuit begot a daughter and married her to a man in California, where the people are at least as stupid as in Paraguay. These were the materials upon which I reared my first edifice.*

I so much enjoyed writing the letters which compose the four parts of *La Famille Vertueuse* that I gave every moment at my disposition to them. Rose and her sister supplied the driving force, and these sweet girls have never ceased since to stimulate my vein. They appear again in *L'École des Pères*, in the story called *"Amour paternel"*; they occur twice in *Les Contemporaines*, in the 25th, *l'Ancienne Inclination*, and in the 52nd, *La*

*All my subsequent works, such as *Lucille, La Confidence Nécessaire, Le Marquis de T. . . . , La Fille Naturelle, Le Pied de Fanchette, L'Ecole des Pères,* etc. were founded on fact. *La Confidence* was the first in which I told my own story in a disguised form; *Le Marquis de T. . . .* was based on an interesting anecdote concerning the conversion of a profligate young financier by his pretty cousin; *La Fille Naturelle*, on a touching incident which Edme the bookseller witnessed. *Le Pied de Fanchette* had a foundation in fact and a Muse: the milliner's daughter at the corner of the Rue Tiquetonne was based on the Duchesse de Choiseul of the pretty feet, and the fair Mme Lévêque, daughter of Moreau the surgeon of the Hôtel-Dieu and wife of a merchant in the same trade as Rose Bourgeois's father, was my muse. *Émile* was the only foundation of *L'École des Pères*, but Rose and her sister are introduced in the touching episode *Amour Paternel.* The heroines of my *Lettres d'une Fille à son Père* were the four sisters Decours (one of whom was still pretty in 1790) – that is to say, most of the horrors contained in that book were drawn from them, and all that is pleasing from their niece, at the present time a respected woman.

Dédaigneuse. There was a particular reason, which I shall explain in due course, for making Mlle Rose the heroine of the 25th *Contemporaine*, just as Jeannette Rousseau* is the heroine of the 26th, *Premier Amour.* We find them again in *Les Nuits de Paris*, and even in *La Semaine Nocturne*, which was not printed until 1790, wherein they are the subject of a pretty anecdote, *Les Deux n'en font qu'Une.* Finally they are mentioned by name in *L'Enclos et les Oiseaux.*

I made considerable progress with *La Famille Vertueuse* during the early months of 1766. My life was tranquil at this time as my position had somewhat altered; we shall hear shortly how this came about, and see that a kindness is never lost. But I will conclude the story of my first book.

The first draft finished, I decided to consult a man of letters before making the fair copy; but what a choice I made! I approached the author of *Lucette* or *Les Progrès du Libertinage*, because he had just sent the third part of this little novel, which was rubbishy stuff (I refer to the third part), to be printed by F. A. Quillau, and thus we had become acquainted. He was living at this time in the *Marais*, *Rue Phelippeaux*, just opposite the *Temple*, and there I called upon him to ask him to be my Aristarchus. He agreed (as though he were competent!) and it was decided that I should go to him every evening, and a part of the night be spent in reading and correction. This plan was carried out. We read twenty pages during the first evening, of which he made me delete half. Towards midnight sleep overcame us. I was staying the night with him, and he said: "You can have my

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*Yesterday, the 4th June, 1788, I had news of Jeannette for the first time in 37 years. She never married, but undertook the education of some children at *Riom* in *Auvergne.* The parents treated her with great consideration; not so her pupils, and she is returning to Courgis. I commemorate this day. . . . I have always unconsciously had the idea that Jeannette Rousseau was not married. . . . It is but one more thing with which to reproach myself!

bed to yourself, as I have a mistress in the house, and I began sleeping with her yesterday. We have known each other four days: on the first I saw her; on the second I spoke to her; on the third I . . ." "You are a veritable Cæsar!" I said. "Is she a harlot?" "She is a very pretty girl!" I looked at black, dirty little Mamonet and burst out laughing; he left me in sole possession of his bed.

Next evening when I arrived at the hour agreed upon, I found a pretty brunette with Progrès; she squinted a little, but this did not misbecome her. I was amazed that such a girl should have given herself on the third day to a man who looked like a baboon, who had neither shirt nor breeches and whose succinct garments were held together with pins under a little grey overcoat like a brewer's overall. And soon I found there was more to her than a face. She had intelligence, and the propriety of her conversation gave evidence of noble sentiments. My astonishment redoubled. Finally we began our reading. One of my characters was called Jeannette; Progrès thought the name common (the wretch! he had never known Jeannette Rousseau!) and wanted me to change it to Angélique, and so it has remained. His real reason was that his mistress was Mlle *Angélique Nimot*, the daughter of that famous Court Optician who used to live in the *Cloître Saint-Benoît*, in the house now occupied by citizen Louvet, his successor. I yielded with a good grace. I now had two critics, but Mlle Nimot had infinitely better taste than M. Progrès. She it was who dictated this phrase to me, speaking of middle-class girls: "We see them fooling together, making meaningless remarks with an affected air and then bursting into peals of idiotic laughter." Though the phrase is ambiguous, it was the best correction suggested, and the only one I retained when I made a fair copy; at least it gives one some sort of a picture, whereas

Progrès's phrases were always flat and colourless. In the course of this sitting my surprise at Angélique's conduct diminished; I realised that M. Progrès's quality of author and poet (he had written the last canto, *Bâton*, of the *Dunciade* for its author) was an all-powerful charm in the eyes of a rapacious "lecturomaniac." But she showed great embarrassment when, at the conclusion of the session, Progrès produced his greasy little nightcap and prepared to go downstairs with her. She stood still looking at us. . . . "Come along, Mademoiselle," said Mamonet. "But where are you going?" "To your room . . . we are going to bed together. . . . Monsieur Nicolas knows how it is; I have no secrets from my friends." "The idea! How very amusing, Monsieur! So you tell a gentleman I scarcely know . . . that . . ." "But I know him; it is not necessary for you to know him! I vouch for him." "If Monsieur is as discreet as you . . ." "Do not tell me that you have the prejudices of a little work girl, Mademoiselle! A girl like you! . . . My friend," he said, turning to me, "Mademoiselle Angélique is a philosopher; she is kept by an old man, Monsieur Agnaisse, steward to the late Princess Carignan, to whom Mademoiselle used to read. . . ." Angélique's Nimot stupefaction was indescribable! "Are poets incapable of holding their tongues about anything?" she asked at length. "No, Mademoiselle, only about things that don't matter." "What do you mean, don't matter! . . . You said that you were going to bed with me! . . ." "Well, what about it?" "You are right," said Angélique, blushing, "it is only prejudice that makes a crime of it, and if Monsieur is not . . ." "Monsieur Nicolas is also a philosopher," exclaimed Progrès. "He is more of a philosopher than Voltaire himself, and than all the other philosophers ancient or modern." "In that case, you are less indiscreet than I thought." "There has been no indiscretion, Mademoiselle," I said to her. "Not that

I approve of Monsieur Progrès's candour; on the contrary, I pity you for being in such hands. . . ." "That's what he thinks, Mademoiselle," interrupted Mamonet, "but reflect, he is only a prentice author, whereas I am a past master of the art! At this very moment I am writing *La Poétique de l'Opéra Bouffon.*"* Angélique smiled and they went out arm-in-arm like husband and wife. . . . I slept alone in Progrès's filthy lair, and as it was winter, I was not attacked by the cavalry, but the infantry harassed me somewhat.

I only went three or four more times to Progrès, and then it was only to *have* Angélique. I saw that Mamonet was going to be no help to me. So I waited until there was business to do out of doors, and then postponed it until Progrès visited us, which he soon did as he wanted to hear about my book. I told him that I had given it up, and he seemed delighted. Then I enquired where he was going. "To *Vente* my bookseller . . ." he said, and added in a whisper: "I have an assignation with his eldest daughter. . . . She is slightly hump-backed, but very appetising. . . . I missed my chance the other day, and yesterday she said: 'Pooh! the booby!' I shan't fail her to-day!" "Wretch!" I exclaimed. "And you with so pretty a mistress!" "My poor apprentice! Are you still unaware that authors behave like the great nobles!" And, with a pitying glance, he departed. . . . I followed him immediately and flew to Angélique Nimot. An abbé was just coming out of her apartment, and I found her still in disorder: "Do you know where Progrès is?" I asked. "Yes, he is retrieving his reputation." "His reputation?" "Yes, with Mademoiselle V. . . . I gave him a rest last

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*In fact, a not unamusing book, had not the bookseller Cailleau, who had the worst judgment in the world, made him spoil it and turn it into a nonsensical thing entitled *De l'Art du Théâtre en Générale.* However, it is true that Cailleau bought the book and sold it by the ream.

night for that very purpose." "Gad, my beauty, and I took a rest also; and you are too good a philosopher to be strict with me!" "But what if he should come in? You are the only person he is jealous of." "He has only just begun upon his hunchback, and that sort is very ardent; he will be busy for a long time." Angélique could not resist. . . . But she only gave herself after she had performed a certain operation on herself to rearouse desire (thus does residence with a Princess blunt the senses). . . . When she was sufficiently stimulated, she cried: "Now! Now!" My pleasure was mediocre, and I left her, not to return. Two years later I gave her a daughter, little Fanchette, the only pretty child she had. It was this poor little girl who was prostituted at the age of five by the infamous Louison, and who died in her mother's house in 1782! . . .

When I had recopied my book, without showing it to Progrès, I asked for a censor, and was given the good M. *Albaret*, whose memory should be honoured by all men of letters. This censor read my book with so much pleasure that he approved it in the most flattering terms; he found something fresh about its treatment. I had made the acquaintance of M. Albaret after I became a foreman: a certain M. du Rosoy had his *Clairval Philosophe* and his *Poèmes des Six Sens* printed by us, and I used to take the proofs to M. Albaret, his censor, and we would talk. "This inflated little rat has no idea but to surprise me!" he said. "He stuffs an insipid novel, devoid of incident, with metaphysics of which he understands not a word, and fills it full of nothing but tedious and fantastic arguments." (I have one complete example of this book; it is a masterpiece of unintelligible rubbish!) My censor's approbation, which can be found at the end of the fourth volume, raised me in my own estimation. At the time I was living alone in the fourth lodging I had had since my arrival in Paris; this was in the Rue de la Harpe, next door to the *Collège de Justice.* I wrote to M. Bourgeois, enclosing the censor's approbation, and asked permission to dedicate my book to Mlle Rose, who had given me the strength to write it. Here is the answer I received: *Monsieur: the delicacy of your way of thinking, and the modesty which pervades your dedicatory epistle, announces in advance the merits of your book. My wife and I are very sensible of the honour you have done us in wishing to dedicate a volume you are about to publish to my daughter. Yet, since you ask my permission, I am deeply distressed to have to refuse it; but private family reasons force me to do so. I could not answer sooner, as I was occupied with my business, and the delay which my silence must have caused, adds to my disappointment.* His letter was dated, on the back, the 17th of December, 1766. It was straightforward and all that it should be. How could I have imagined that he would permit me to dedicate a novel to so fair a girl, and one belonging to a class of citizens who are better left in honourable obscurity! But my enthusiasm made me believe that everyone must see my young divinity with my eyes: for she was still my divinity, on account of her striking resemblance to Mme Parangon and still more so to Mlle Désirée, the godmother of my daughter; a fact which made the latter very dear to me at times, especially when we were alone together.

I sold *La Famille Vertueuse** to Widow Duchesne at fifteen livres the sheet. The book worked out at fifty-one sheets, and I thought myself very rich! I had never owned so large a sum of money. I was supervising the printing of it by F. A. Quillau, both as foreman and author, during the first six months of 1767, but the book did not appear until Martinmas.

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*It would appear that Restif, then a young unknown working printer, received 765 livres, or between eight to nine thousand francs in present money, for this, his first book. He was, however, by no means so successful with his immediately following books. [Ed.]

The orthography is the one I favoured at the time, but it is unusual and interfered with the sales. . . . I relinquished my place as foreman before I knew how my book would be received; it frightens me even now when I remember my self-confidence! But seven hundred livres seemed an inexhaustible fortune to me, and ideas for five or six other books, all bad with the exception of *Le Pornographe*, a rich and fertile fund of material which could not fail. . . .

I have faithfully described the facts leading up to a decisive step which at last extricated me from the most exacting bondage; I was hardly richer, but I was free. . . . O liberty, the supreme good! But for Rose Bourgeois, my soul might never have risen high enough to desire you! Accept my homage, enchanting woman! . . . I have never been ungrateful to you, I have never forgotten you! Whenever I have depicted you I have endowed you with every charm and virtue; I owe you as much as I owe to Mme Parangon. . . . What think you, O my Reader? Was not some secret sympathy at work? The fair Rose and that eager charming Eugénie who was so well disposed towards me, were, so it is said, the grand-daughters of that beautiful and virtuous Parisian, Rose Pombelins, of whom my father Edme nearly became the happy husband! . . . I only discovered this afterwards – fortunately! for it would have increased my regrets and changed them into despair! . . . But I must now return to certain facts I have omitted, which influenced my whole life.

After the departure of my Alsatian friend, Bathilde (for if the heart is good, I am not ashamed to admit affection for a girl, whatever her conduct or the use to which she may put her charms; especially when, as in the case of Bathilde, Sailly, and that masterpiece of nature, my Zéphire, she has been thrust into her vile trade before reason had developed) . . . after the departure of Bathilde, I would sometimes walk to the Rue Honoré at evening to gaze tenderly at her house and at Zéphire's. On one such occasion towards the end of 1764, during the period of my adoration for the fair Rose, I was standing in the doorway of Bonnedame's junk shop when a tall pretty girl passed by, her bosom uncovered to disclose the breasts with all the effrontery of utter shamelessness. She was most beautiful and had the noblest face, and she wakened my pity, not my lust. "You are too beautiful thus to degrade yourself, my child," I said. She glanced at me without answering, but when she passed again she was wearing a neckerchief. We were living opposite Talon at the time. I was painfully affected by the prostitution of this girl, but I had no means of extricating her from her calamitous profession; however, it occurred to me that it would be a step towards honesty if she were a kept mistress. So I mentioned her when I got home, and suggested that we might interest Mlle Talon, Mlle Désirée, pretty Brulée, and even Mme Desvignes, the clock-maker's wife, on her behalf, as they might know some decent people. There was still a certain candour in Agnès Lebègue's nature; she saw nothing compromising to herself in the girl's position, and we agreed not to tell the others that she was a prostitute. Presumably to improve her chances, Agnès, unknown to me, described her to our friends as my sister, a tall well-made girl who had had the misfortune to have a child; so she passed for Marie-Geneviève, that sister who had been seduced by the resident priest of Saint-Jacques, and who had just been released from Sainte-Pélagie. The four ladies bestirred themselves at once, and within a fortnight had found someone for my supposed sister. But first he had to see her.

When I was told how things stood, I accosted the tall girl of the *Rue du Pélican* (she was in the house of that cruel leech, who always called herself

La Piron, because she had once had the honour of receiving that poet, and wanted to get the credit for it), and asked her if she would not rather belong to one man. "I would prefer it even if I had nothing but the barest necessities," she replied. "Our life is so wretched that the mere description of it would make you shudder." "I have found the kind of man you need; he is in easy circumstances, but of course he must see you. Be ready at nine o'clock to-morrow morning and dress decently: I will come and fetch you, for he must not know what you have been." "Ah, you have said just what I feared! . . . If I can still pass for an honest girl, be sure that I shall be one!" I told her to be punctual, and left her.

I presented myself next day at nine o'clock and asked for *Mlle Clermont*, the name she had given me. La Piron received me like a fishwife; however, she summoned all her girls, to the number of ten or twelve. They were all pleasing, but there was one among them, who was very young and never went into the streets, who seemed to me the prettiest person imaginable (it was Melquière). . . . I expected Clermont to speak to me when she saw me, but not in the least; she made no sign of recognition, and it was I who had to address her. "What does this man want? I do not know him." "All the same, he asked for you," answered La Piron. "Go up to your room, and you can renew your acquaintance." When we were shut in together, I asked her if she had changed her mind. "Certainly not," she answered, "but one has to be wily. If I had gone out with you, La Piron would have set up an interminable cackling. Go now, and wait for me in one of the entries in the Rue Saint-Honoré: I shall not join you for another three-quarters of an hour." There was no choice but to lose precious time. I waited, and at last Clermont appeared, dressed like a pretty work girl and wearing a mob cap: she was a thousand times more lovely thus. We took a cab to the *Croix-du-Trahoir*, and from there I escorted her to my third apartment, which was at the corner of the *Rue des Rats*, in the house of Desbœufs, the father of the architect.

Despite her schooling in impudence and my reassuring words, Clermont was terrified lest my wife should give her a bad reception, and once or twice she nearly turned tail. However, I trapped her at last by telling her that I lived on the fourth floor, so that she was in my apartment on the third before she was aware of it. Agnès Lebègue and Clermont took to each other at first glance, and after this interview I had no need to urge Clermont to come back to us; it was the thing she most longed to do. She left La Piron next morning with what she could carry in her hands; for it is the policy of bawds to see that the girls on whom they batten are always in their debt; to compass which, they cheat them abominably, charging outrageously for the smallest item of dress, and making them pay for wine and coffee and liqueurs over and above the thirty sous a day for board and lodging; so that, if they are not careful, these poor wretches sometimes pay her as much as six to nine francs a day. If a girl tears a dress, she has to pay for it; the inspector takes his share, and will always support the bawd. When she left La Piron, Clermont thought she was two hundred francs to the good; but, on the contrary, by the time the bawd had made up her account, she owed four hundred. La Piron kept all her linen, the dresses she had paid so dearly for, and all her jewels; and issued an injunction to pay within fifteen days, in default of which all her property would revert to the procuress. I spoke myself to the inspector, Maret, in the Rue Sainte-Anne; but the slippery knave had nothing to fear from me, and while admitting without the slightest shame that the girl had right on her side, affirmed that the bawd would keep her property unless the four hundred francs were forthcoming. So we let the matter drop, and La Piron, who has retired on an income of six thousand livres, benefited.

Our friends opposite very much admired *Sara Krammer*, and the affection which Agnès had taken for the girl changed their plans. They decided that the man Brulée had found was not worthy of her, so she was not shown to him, but they looked about for a better "match." A certain *M. Imbert de Saint-Maurice*, who had formerly been my father-in-law's neighbour, was in Paris at the time. He was rich and ruddy, stubborn and miserly, but he had known Agnès Lebègue when she was young, well-off and pretty, and had retained a great fondness for her. (We have seen above that he violated her.) This gentleman was separated from his wife, who was from Orleans, and he had suggested to Agnès that she should leave me to become his mistress and the governess of his only daughter. Now Agnès Lebègue's mind turned to him for Sara Krammer; but she said nothing about him to Talon or her sisters, as she wanted to manage the business alone. Nor was I in her confidence. Sara lived with us and, refreshed by repose, she grew more beautiful every day. Agnès Lebègue cherished her, and she loved Agnès tenderly in return. Harmony reigned between them. Everyone thought she was my sister, and she did nothing to bring discredit upon me; on the contrary her modesty and good manners won the praise of all. Then young Desbœufs the architect, our landlord's son, fell hopelessly in love with her and offered to marry her. We were doubly embarrassed; and still Imbert de Saint-Maurice did not arrive. However, Sara solved the problem for us by saying that she felt nothing but aversion for the young man. Finally pretty Brulée found someone for Sara Krammer (whom we always called Geneviève), and then Agnès Lebègue felt that she had been imprudent to let the girl pass for my sister. So she told the truth to the very person who had just found a man to support her. At first la Brulée was stunned: "But he is a respectable man, and I have offered him a girl belonging to an honest family, who is only ready to give herself because of a mishap through which she quarrelled with her parents. What will he say?" "First let us see whether I suit him," suggested Sara. "If I make a favourable impression I can tell the truth without risk, if I do not, then we can keep our secret." This seemed the wisest thing to do. The man visited our apartment in my absence; imagine Agnès Lebègue's surprise when she saw M. Imbert de Saint-Maurice, who was now calling himself *M. de Chapote*! He was so pleased with Sara that, after he had left us, he told little Brulée that he would give her an even better position than he had proposed to do, and, out of consideration for Mlle Lebègue, would entrust her, not only with his daughter but with the management of his household. We thought that Sara's future was assured, and so did Mlle Talon and Mlle Brulée; and Mlle Désirée, who had also taken a liking for her, congratulated her. Everyone was delighted.

M. de Chapote came to fetch Sara next day. When I had heard the nature of his proposals the evening before, I had felt somewhat uneasy: "It is always possible that a public woman will be recognised. A chain of circumstances, for which we are in no way to blame, has forced us into deceiving this man, but if he finds out the truth, he will have the heartiest contempt for us and may even revenge himself." I communicated my fears to Agnès Lebègue, and she, frightened, begged Sara to tell the truth as soon as possible. Just as the girl had promised to do so, M. de Chapote arrived, and Sara went away in the carriage with him. We had repeatedly advised her not to accept his advances too readily, so as to avert all suspicion of her previous trade; and presumably she followed our advice, for during the week that followed, M. de Chapote's respect for her steadily increased.

Yet my wife and I were uneasy. Sara came to see us at the end of a week, bringing Agnès a present from her "gentleman." Agnès asked her if she had confessed the truth. "No, not yet: Mademoiselle Brulée advised me not to, because she said, all our work would be undone if I did." We pointed out that, as Mlle Brulée had not known her secret from the first, her advice was sound from her point of view, but that we were exposed to the most terrible consequences if anyone should recognise her. Then Sara promised to speak. However, I advised her not to do so until she felt quite safe in M. de Chapote's attachment. I told her something about Zéphire, to show her that, once she was loved, she could fearlessly confess the whole truth by giving Zéphire's theories as her own. When she left, the whole household saluted her in the most affectionate manner, which made an excellent impression on coachman and lackey.

We did not see Sara again for three weeks. She was happy with M. de Chapote, who made much of her, and treated her with every consideration; she had not yet completely given herself to him, as he preferred to win her heart first. Also he was planning to help us substantially, as being the brother and sister-in-law of his daughter's governess. We were delighted by this good news. Sara told us that she did not despair of winning his honest attachment, in which event she would never need to disclose the truth about herself. We agreed with this, and I dispensed Sara from confession with all my heart, feeling that if the man developed a genuine affection for her I could meet him without blushing, and he would be much less angry should he discover anything.

But Sara deceived us on one point; she had become M. de Chapote's mistress in every sense of the word directly after her first visit to us. Little Brulée knew this, and it was by her advice that Sara had kept it a secret from us. These were the very words she used: "There is no need to hide anything from Mademoiselle Talon and myself; but you cannot be as frank with an honest married couple, for such people are not accustomed to hearing certain details; so be discreet. Another thing: I know your man, and the thought of your being the sister of Monsieur Nicolas and of the Curé of Courgis, etc., and the daughter of the most upright man in his canton will be a stronger tie than any beauty. In proof of this: before you, he had little *Rennefort*, the tailor's daughter of the Rue du Fouarre; she was prettier than you and had a thousand agreeable gifts, yet he only kept her for six months. Then he had *Rosalie*, an untouched child and as pretty as a little Love; but he deserted her after three months, on discovering that her parents were in wretched circumstances. He had been told that they were well-to-do lemonade sellers at *Épinal*, and he adored her while he believed this. From the moment that he finds out that you are the daughter of poor Genevans, that you were only recently converted and were raped by the very man who received your abjuration, he will see nothing in you but an adventuress. Your brother is a monk in Sainte-Geneviève, it is true; but he was only received into the order as a favour, and it will not make much impression." Sara followed this advice, which was in part inspired by Doctor Brulée, and held her tongue.

One Sunday she called to see us and told us that her "gentleman" had left the day before for Orleans, and had, she knew, charged an old servant of his to keep a watchful eye upon her. She had come to beg Agnès Lebègue to stay with her night and day during his absence. We agreed to this plan, but M. de Chapote's jealousy had enlightened me, and I guessed that Sara was his mistress. However, I preferred to leave Agnès in her good opinion which, with her temperament, would last as long as Sara wanted it to; for Agnès never suspected evil that was concealed from her. One Sunday I went to see Agnès and Sara and we all three went out together. As we were walking along the Nouveaux Boulevards, which had only just been finished, we met a ruddy sun-burned little man who stared hard at Sara. "I have seen that man at La Piron's," she whispered to me, "but he is a civil fellow. He is a muslin merchant of Macon, and has come to plead against the tax farmers. Agnès understands about fashions, and this man deals in gauzes and taffetas; he might be very useful to her. . . ." As she finished speaking, the merchant approached us, and saluted Sara in the most respectful manner. She returned his greeting, and said to her friend: "You ask him to join us; if anyone is spying on me, that will put them off the scent." My wife and I joined in the invitation. Then I took the man aside and told him briefly that I was a friend of Sara's brother, in whose name I had withdrawn her from the place where he had met her (La Piron's). My words produced a marvellous effect. Convinced that Sara's former profession was known only to himself and to me, the merchant became doubly attentive; and he was stimulated to an even greater politeness by a development I was far from expecting: he fell in love with Agnès Lebègue! On our return to the house, he of himself proposed to supply Agnès with stuffs, to be paid for after her work had been done and sold, which seemed to us a most favourable arrangement. Furthermore M. *Moulins*, for that was his name, was honest, frank and obliging; in a word, all that Sara had described him to be. Such was the new friend whom this good girl made for us, and who contributed more than anything else finally to determine my future. . . .

After she had lived for two years in perfect happiness with M. de Chapote, Sara thought there was no risk in confessing that she was not my sister. He then wanted to know who she was, and what she had done after she had been converted. Sara was not prepared for such a minute enquiry. Then a compatriot of hers, who was jealous of her good fortune, revealed her misdemeanours; and we were interrogated, care being taken that Sara should have no chance of communicating with us beforehand. M. de Chapote told us that she had confessed everything, adding so many particulars that we were convinced; but it did not suit us to admit what we knew, so we denied the story. Fortunately her brother was an intelligent fellow and supported our statements without there being any possibility of collusion. Krammer and I came together directly we were free to do so. Sara was still not allowed to speak to either of us, but, finding that by chance our statements had agreed, we decided to unite our efforts to prove that the Genevan had libelled her. But we had scarcely foreseen that La Piron would be summoned and confronted by the pale and trembling Sara. However, this woman had just retired from her infamous trade, and, fearing to commit herself by confessing that she had taken a new convert into her house, and one brought there by her seducer, asserted that she did not know the girl and had never seen her. By great good luck M. Moulins met her on her way home; she told him what she had just said, and he hastened to inform us. He was still with us when a little servant called, who alleged that she had been sent by Sara to tell us that La Piron had betrayed her and that there was nothing more to hide. It must be confessed that my wife and I would have fallen into this trap; but M. Moulins, who did a little smuggling and was much wilier than were we, interposed and indignantly dismissed the servant. Then he hurried off to La Piron with bitter complaints, and she volunteered to accompany him to M. de Chapote's house to confirm her statement that she had never seen Sara. The merchant did not think it wise to accept her offer, but, finding Sara and M. de Chapote with my wife on his return and sure now of his ground, he was able to speak with conviction and as a friend of Sara's brother, so that M. de Chapote went home persuaded that the Genevan had slandered his mistress. As the former knew nothing except by hearsay and had never seen Sara when she was a prostitute, she allowed herself to be convinced that she had been misled. Thus Sara escaped ruin this time; but she was not treated with the same consideration. The truth was finally discovered in 1768, and the poor girl was dismissed. La Brulée opened her doors to her, and she died of grief in her house. The latter took possession of all her property in spite of a will in my favour (which she was clever enough to suppress), and this, with her own economies, put her in such easy circumstances that, having got rid of Doctor Brulée, who returned to his own province, she found herself in a position to live independently and, in some sort, honestly. . . .

But let us return to the consequences of this meeting with the merchant Moulins which so strongly influenced my life. Not that there were not grievous trials ahead of me! Those that we have already heard about were nothing to what I endured in 68, 69, and still more in 70; in 71, 72, 73, 74, 75, and 76, with which year I shall conclude this seventh epoch of my life.

With the end of 1766 I had finished the manuscript of *La Famille Vertueuse* and entered into negotiations with the widow Duchesne, through her partner Guy, who was attracted to the book by M. Albaret's approbation. The printing was begun on the 20th of January, 1767. I was drunk with joy at seeing myself in print. The four volumes were completed in

May, but the work was not put on sale until Martinmas – luckily for me, as its failure would have discouraged me. As it was, I decided to devote myself entirely to literature. The work of a foreman, conscientiously fulfilled, was ruining my digestion, and I needed rest. M. Moulins was employing my wife to sell his muslins at so much per cent. the ell, and she was independent of me. He also persuaded us to leave the Rue des Rats and hired a lodging for us in the Rue de la Harpe, next door to the Collège de Justice. In the spring he made a tour through Picardie with his horse and covered cart, and, in the meantime, Agnès Lebègue sold muslins in the purlieus of Paris. During her absence our daughter Agnès was put to board with Mlle Désirée's mother. I was very intimate at this time with that pretty girl, whose engagement to M. de Roncy had been broken off (no doubt through his discovery of certain facts). Once a week I would prepare an excellent *pot-au-feu* with a fowl or capon, and Désirée would come to dinner with me. Afterwards we would talk of Nicard, put into practice the wish she had expressed to Désirée, and we were very happy. In the evening I would take her home.

However, this joyous life was soon to come to an end! Désirée found a husband, and our friendship ceased.

I resigned my foremanship about the 27th of May. There were four hundred francs owing to me from F. A. Quillau, and seven hundred and eighty to come from my *Famille Vertueuse*, and with these two sums I felt a Croesus. As my wife was independent of me through the business M. Moulins put in her way, I planned to spend some months with my dear mother, hoping, in the retired solitudes of Sacy, to compose some fine and excellent book which I could sell in Paris in the winter and have printed. In the meanwhile I began my *Pornographe*, which was returned to me by the censor *Chenu* with the remark that it legalised an "immoral" profession.

So I laid aside this book for the moment and began my *École de la Jeunesse*, with this epigraph: *Dextera præcipue capit indulgentia mentes,* etc. As a novel it was fundamentally devoid of imagination, and I repeated much of what J. J. Rousseau, of whom I was an enthusiastic admirer at the time, had already said. I did not proceed far with this ungrateful task. I did little work in the deserted apartment in the Rue de la Harpe, and when the merchant Moulins took a lodging in the *Rue Trainée*, opposite the portal of the Saint-Eustache, I decided to leave for Sacy.

On the first day of my freedom from the duties of a foreman, I had dinner with Progrès and *Karrats* (or *Carra*) in the *Place Maubert.* Karrats fetched a plump girl from a bad house, who he pretended was his cousin. We dined meagrely off the food provided by an eight-sou Inn, and after this, to Progrès, splendid repast, we played *hot cockles.* Karrats had to go out on business and left the three of us together, in the certainty that we should play tricks with his supposed cousin. He was wrong as far as I was concerned, and it was I whom he wanted to trap; but Progrès copulated two or three times with her. I left directly Karrats came back in the evening. Some days later I heard from Progrès that the "cousin's" favours had had an aftermath, and the worst of it was that he had handed on his disease to Mlle Nimot, who was very much astonished by the gift! They were both cured, but Angélique, somewhat disillusioned with her lover-poet, no longer desired to become his wife as she had promised, and entered the Convent of Sainte-Aure under the protection of Mme Agnaisse, the wife of that steward who had kept Angélique; and M. Agnaisse agreed to pay his mistress's board as well as his wife's on condition he never saw either of them again. Mlle Nimot had had a child by the steward while she was reader to the Princesse de Carignan; the latter forgave her fault, but unfortunately for Angélique death stole away her patroness. It was after this irreparable misfortune that she had gone to live in the *Hôtel de Malte*, next door to Progrès, who had made her acquaintance so quickly and completely. The child was brought up by M. Agnaisse and he loved it dearly. Progrès did not accept the withdrawal of his Dulcinea with resignation: he went and threw stones at the convent windows every evening in order to make them give his Angélique back to him. The method adopted by this new Médor was successful: the Superior did not want to keep a girl in her house whose lover was causing a scandal, in addition to which Progrès had written her the most dreadful things about Mlle Nimot. After having manifested his esteem for the fair Angélique in this delicate manner, and, aided by the wise counsels of his bookseller, Cailleau, deprived her of her last refuge, he married her, which was the height of folly for both of them.

The day after this marriage, at which I was not present, I met Sailly at the door of No. 47 *Rue Mercier de la Nouvelle-Halle.* I uttered a cry of joy on seeing her, and flew to meet her. We renewed acquaintanceship, and she told me that she had been a dancer at the Français, and that she was not living with anyone for the moment. I told her that I was leaving Paris for some time and that I had become an author. "A wretched trade!" she said. Honest men die of hunger in it, and rogues come to a bad end." We went into her apartment. I told her about my *Pornographe* and asked for information on various points, including the number of women engaged in prostitution. Clermont, or Sara Krammer, had already given me a great many facts which I was using. I showed Sailly my digest and my notes, and she promised to supply me with some anecdotes and to tell me approximately the number of public women, on condition that she should be the first woman I visited on my return. And this I promised. We dined with three of her comrades. The company was not entirely bad, and the conversation was more amusing than I had dared to hope. At the end of the meal, Sailly said to the three others: "This is the man who was tossed in a blanket, in that adventure I told you about." It is impossible to express the effect this remark produced! The three girls treated me like a god. After they had overwhelmed me with caresses, one of their number, who was young and fresh and beautifully made, and whom I met again afterwards in the millinery shop of Mme Demeudes, Rue Honoré, opposite to the Commissary Chesnon senior, suggested to the others that they should supply me with an incident for my *Pornographe*. "I have found some one to keep me," she said, "and no longer practise. But I will do so to-day, to provide him with a scene. Go into that closet with the glazed door." I protested in vain; even Sailly encouraged her. . . . In a quarter of an hour, two of them came back with a tall old man who looked to me like one of the Councillors at the Châtelet. They stripped completely, and when the skeleton had undressed too, they took up rods and chased him with them like Furies. At last he managed to disarm one of them, and then, despite their cries, beat both until the blood came. Sailly laughed till the tears ran down her cheeks. Finally the third, who had not undressed, went to the help of the two others, but their wounds took a month to heal. Thus I got something I had not expected.

I left Paris to go to my dear mother on the 22nd of June, 1767. I shall never forget that journey! Before I had been an hour on the boat I foregathered with a charming young man who was very friendly to me. His tutor, a certain Abbé *de Sapt*, presented me with a copy of a discourse on the sciences, which he had delivered at Versailles and had just had printed in Paris. As it was extremely hot, the youth and I slept on deck under a big blanket which I was taking to Sacy. . . . I was surprised by my fellow-traveller's gentleness and beauty, and by the careful eye which the Abbé kept upon us, but I had no suspicion of the truth. Next day an elderly lady and a very pretty girl joined the boat; they were only travelling about ten leagues. I was struck by the young lady's beauty and could not take my eyes away from her; and, seeing that my young friend was handsome and well dressed, it seemed to me that I could easily get into conversation with the new arrivals with his help. "What an amiable girl!" I remarked to him. "You have a face no woman could refuse, so let us go and talk to them." The young man showed little enthusiasm; however, I insisted so eagerly that he gave way to my importunity, and we accosted Mlle Sophie (the name by which the old lady addressed her). My friend saluted her coldly, I with warmth. She responded to me with a most charming smile, but paid little attention to the handsome young man; and, choosing a moment when he was talking to the old lady, she asked me: "Have you known that handsome boy long?" "Only since yesterday; we got on board together." "I know him; he is a neighbour of ours." "Where is he going?" "To Lyons with his tutor, from what he told me. Doubtless you know," added Sophie, "that he is a girl." "I! I had no idea." "There is no mystery about it. Her parents want her to travel, but dressed as a boy. The Abbé is a good man, but he is hardly seductive; also he is in a condition which leads them to entrust her to him in all confidence. . . . Finally, the servant who attends them is a woman of a certain age, charged with the care of Sophie. Now you know the peculiarities of the position." "And who is the lady with you, sweet damsel, for you interest me intensely?" "She is the mother of the lady who acts to me as a mother: it would be useless for you to know more." "Possibly, but I cannot express how much I have longed to speak to you. Could I not meet you again anywhere? I am returning to Paris in four or five months." "No, we only came to Paris on business, and now that it is finished, we are returning to Dijon." "To Dijon! . . . Do you know Mademoiselle Omphale?" "Yes, she is the mother of my two best friends." "Ah, who are they?" "Ask your travelling companion. But since you already know Mademoiselle Omphale . . . the supposed young man is Hypsipyle." I was dumbfounded: every word that the girl uttered amazed me, and I should have thought that chance was jesting with me had it not been for the names she mentioned. At this moment the ladies' stopping place was announced, and Sophie and her escort went ashore in the skiff while I was looking for Hypsipyle. I could find neither him nor the Abbé Sapt; and was making enquiries everywhere for them when the clerk told me that they had landed. I reascended the deck where I had been talking to Sophie and saw that an old woman and a middle-aged lady, who had not left her cabin since the first day of the voyage, together with a man and a maid-servant, were disembarking with Sophie and her companion. I saluted Sophie with hat and hand, and she responded with a curtsey, and with a gesture which seemed to indicate respect. She looked back ten times before getting into a carriage which was apparently in waiting for the whole party, and while I stood enraptured they vanished.

I then asked the clerk if he knew these people. "No," he answered. "But I presume that the lady who stayed in her cabin did not wish to be seen. She was only going as far as Montereau. The other two ladies, the young one and the old, embraced her when they got on board, and afterwards took the seat behind you. I think they recognised you, for I noticed that they held a long conversation, looking at you the while. Did not the Abbé give you a copy of his lectures?" "Yes, here it is." "I heard him saying so to the two new arrivals."

This is all that I have ever known about this strange chance encounter. I repented bitterly of not having taken a boat at once, as I had thought of doing, and followed them; but perhaps they would not have waited for me. Apparently on that day I saw for the last time all that remained to me of Colette. Sophie looked fifteen or even sixteen years of age, though she was only thirteen; and this, combined with the use of a name other than her own, prevented me from having the slightest suspicion of the truth. For the rest, I may have been mistaken: the only thing I know for certain is that I met some acquaintances of Omphale, and I am nearly sure that the middle-aged lady who stayed in her cabin was that very Amazon, who dressed Hypsipyle as a man so that she could travel. If I had had the chance of speaking to her I might have vindicated my conduct; for she cannot have been wholly ill-disposed towards me, since she allowed Hypsipyle to be so friendly with me and the Abbé to come half-way to meet me: two circumstances which had equally surprised me, seeing that I was but poorly clad. Apparently Sophie was not permitted to speak to me, and when Hypsipyle refused to fall in with my wishes, it was because she had found time to consult her mother and was carrying out her orders. Such are my conjectures about this extraordinary meeting. The boat had become intolerable to me, so I deposited my box of books and my trunk in the clerk's cabin and went ashore at Pons. For some time I gathered flowers as I walked (I have kept them to this day) which I shut inside a book, saying: "I will preserve you all my life, in memory of the day on which I met Sophie, whom I believe to be Edmée-Colette, the daughter of myself and of the woman I loved most in all the world. O little flowers, I shall never look upon you without tears!" I wept as I plucked them, and I am weeping as I look at them to-day (1796)! . . .

END OF VOLUME NINE IN RESTIF'S EDITION

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR
FOR THIS VOLUME

80. OMPHALE AT HOME: EDMÉE-COLETTE AND HYPSIPYLE

Monsieur Nicolas at a breakfast table in Omphale's house, with one hand in that of Edmée-Colette, daughter of himself and Madame Parangon, and his eyes fixed upon two portraits. Hypsipyle, at her grandmother's side, is still holding a curtain which she has just drawn back to disclose the portraits of Colette and her father. In a transport, he exclaims: "Ah, God! I am in Olympus, or in Elysium!" [*page 25*]

81. CHRISTINE

Monsieur Nicolas possessing Christine-Vitteaux in the presence of Yonne-Bellecour and her Aunt: "Morality is like a string of pearls." [*page 31*]

82. A NIGHT SCENE

Monsieur Nicolas, roused by the tumult, entering the room of Yonne and her aunt, who are defending themselves against a naked man; the landlord arrives with a light. [*page 33*]

83. THE DEATH OF ZOÉ

Monsieur Nicolas being received by the dying Zoé on his return from Dijon: "My only friend!" [*page 46*]

84. BONNE AND FRANÇOISE-SOPHRONIE SELLIER

Monsieur Nicolas entering the room in which are Françoise and her sister-in-law, Bonne Sellier. He is surprised at Sophronie's beauty. Monsieur Nicolas*: "I knew . . . that Mademoiselle was the most charming person. . . ."* Bonne Sellier*: "I answer for it that you please her." She is looking at Sophronie with a smile.* [*page 52*]

85. THE WEDDING

Monsieur Nicolas walking to church behind Agnès Lebègue, whom M. Parangon is leading by the hand. He is alone. Behind him are his parents and Mme Lebègue; walking beside the bride is Maîne Blonde, the only one of his friends to attend the wedding. A crowd composed of both sexes form a hedge on either side. "So she is married at last!"

A group of three youths, Devarainne, Nizon and Chacheré, are holding a banner out of a window, whereon they are portrayed attempting to throw a young girl into the water. The latter's two companions, Mlles Valois and Laconge, who are little more than children, are holding on to her. [*page 92*]

86. THE THREE FRIENDS

Monsieur Nicolas in the shop with the Dlles Roullot, uniting their hands with that of Maîne Blonde: "For ever!" Claudon is carelessly reclining in an easy chair, one leg half-revealed; Marianne is on a stool, her elbow resting on the counter; Maîne is standing upright at Claudon's side. . . . In the background Monsieur Nicolas is seen speaking firmly to M. Parangon in the presence of three other men and Marianne Geollin, just as he is about to leave the fellow's house for ever. [*page 105*]

87. MADAME CHÉREAU

Monsieur Nicolas with Madame Chéreau, who is bolting the door: "Now we are safe!" [*page 130*]

88. A DANGEROUS MAKE-BELIEVE

Monsieur Nicolas, at dinner in his lodging with Adélaïde Nicard, Beugnet the wood-engraver and Agnès Lebègue, allows Agnès to be courted in order to give all his attention to pretty Adélaïde, who standing up in her apron, is busy about the service. He takes the plates from her, whispers to her, obliges her in every way. The others want to know what he is doing to her. "I have burnt myself!" answers pretty Nicard. [*page 138*]

89. FAREWELL TO BATHILDE

Monsieur Nicolas taking leave of Bathilde who is saying: "One word and I stay. . . ." [*page 149*]

90. DIVERSIONS: TRICKS

Monsieur Nicolas with Nicard in her corset, clasping her waist and kissing her uncovered breast.

(Second half.) *Enjoying Désirée in her room. Désirée says at last: "It is late. I am forgetting myself!"* [*page 154*]

91. CHOUCHOU-BRULÉE

Monsieur Nicolas entering to Chouchou, who throws her cat to the ground on seeing him: "Him? I don't waste my caresses on him!" The hero is springing towards the Fair. [*page 157*]

92. HE CAN STILL LOVE. ROSE BOURGEOIS

Monsieur Nicolas, being surprised by the shop boys, is led into the back shop and there presented to M. Bourgeois: "Here is the man!" The fair Rose is standing by the chimney piece in great agitation, her forehead partially covered by one hand; Eugénie is near the table at which our hero has just been writing; Mme Bourgeois is between the two; M. Bourgeois, with a grave and noble air, is standing ready for the interrogation. [*page 171*]

93. MAMONET AND ANGÉLIQUE NIMOT

Monsieur Nicolas in Progrès's lodging. Angélique Nimot rises and prepares to leave. Progrès puts on his nightcap and lights the candle. Angélique Nimot to Progrès*: "Where are you going?" "We are going to bed."* [*page 182*]

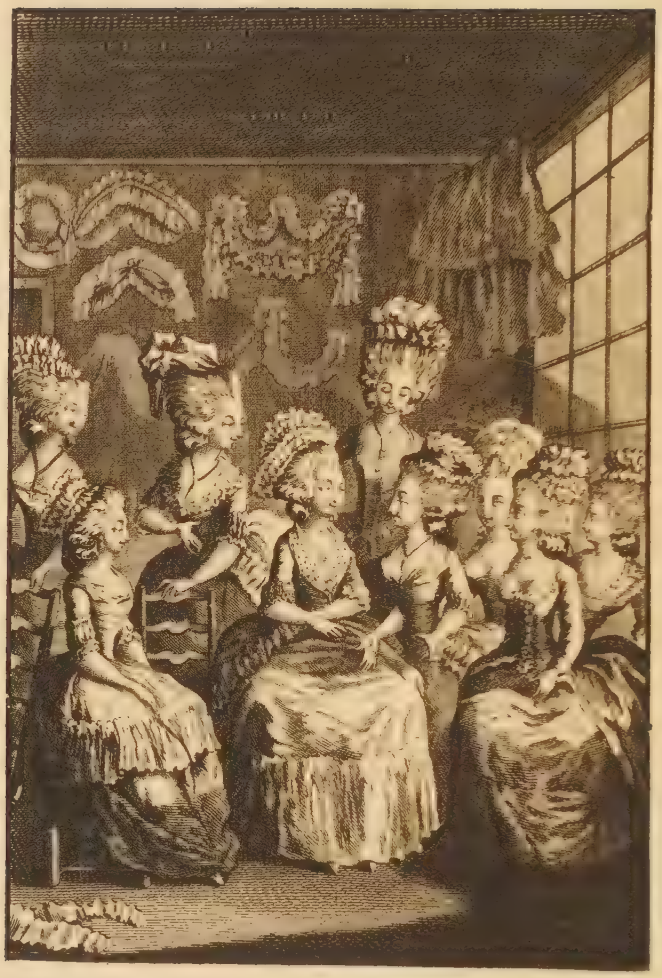
94. SARA KRAMMER AND MELQUIÈRE

Monsieur Nicolas at La Piron's addressing Clermont, or Sara Krammer, in the presence of pretty Melquière, scarcely more than a child, and ten other half-naked girls: "What does this man want? I do not know him." [*page 188*]

THE
SEVENTH EPOCH

Continued

1767-1775



SEVENTH EPOCH

(continued)

WHAT has become of this darling daughter? . . . Alas, I am condemned by Destiny to have no part in my children's lot, even those over whom my authority is sanctioned by law; save always for my angelic Zéphire, subject for never-ending tears. . . . Ah, how then should I have loved her if she had been given to me by Colette and her purity preserved? . . . But her soul was pure, and that charming body, which was the outward sign of the fair spirit within, was cleansed! . . .

I slept at Sens, and went on alone next day to Auxerre. I had meant to ask news of Colombe at Joigny, but I did not do so; my lips refused their office when I tried to speak of her to my hostess. Instead of going to my cousins when I arrived at Auxerre, I lodged at a house in the Marinerie which used to belong to my mother-in-law; it had now been sold and was inhabited by a small inn-keeper named Chomard. I had about ten louis which the widow Duchesne had paid me on account for my *Famille Vertueuse*; I was rich; I had two new suits, I had books, and all the intoxication of first authorship. I revisited certain parts of the town with tender emotion, but my heart was embittered against its inhabitants. They were dishonoured in my eyes. I did not see M. Parangon, but only some of his workmen, such as Bourgoin, Clizot and Rüttot. The last, whom I had seen in Paris when I was a foreman, gave me a cold welcome, and I left without saying goodbye to him. My brother came to fetch me in a covered cart and I reached my mother's house on the 1st of July.

I rested during my first week at Sacy, and the second was occupied by the division of the property actually due to us, and also of that which would come to us some day. This was by my dear mother's wish, so that there should be no difficulties after her decease, and I consented, though unwillingly; for inspiration dried at the business, especially as I had embarked upon the wrong type of book. I wrote little and badly during my four months at Sacy. Nothing stimulated me as in Paris; I felt my ardour cooling and my taste for country work returning. Indeed, I certainly should have devoted myself to the latter if I had had sufficient capital; but my only hope lay in my future efforts, seeing that the last ten years had produced nothing. I used to work in a deserted dovecot, drawing up the ladder after me to be the more undisturbed, and here I read and wrote. Curiously enough I found it quite impossible to work at my *Pornographe* in Sacy; but I began my *Confidence Nécessaire* there. One day I sought to profit by the solitudes of the *Lavières*, or *Fourches-l'Évêque*, the most isolated of all the pastures. But when I got there, the open air, the things about me, the dear places of my childhood, scattered my thoughts, distracted my mind and sterilised imagination, and I could never concentrate sufficiently to produce anything. Memories of the days when I had shepherded the flocks in this place with my unhappy sister Geneviève* absorbed me and I dreamed tenderly upon the times of my youth when we were innocent, my sister and I. The bitter tears I shed over these memories contained the

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*Note (P), p. 381, in *Le Pornographe* (second edition) contains the essentials of the story of her misfortune.

germ of the *Paysan perverti*; but it was impossible for me to concentrate sufficiently to compose. I have realised since that what a writer needs is not absolute solitude, but an individual isolation with the perspective of an innumerable crowd of persons, whom he can see and mingle with and talk to when he so desires. That is why so many people who retire to the country to write come back without having covered a single page.

Nothing of interest happened during my stay in Sacy. I was tempted to go to Dijon, but did not carry out this plan; I sighed only for Paris, whither I returned on the 28th of September.

I took my manuscripts away with me, but left my books, hoping to return in a year or two. I had been to Courgis once to see my brothers, and once I had seen the Abbé Thomas at home, and had read him some pages of *La Famille Vertueuse*. While at Courgis I had met an officer, a nephew of M. Jacquot, canon of Auxerre Cathedral, and I called to see him on my way through Auxerre; but my native air had so brought back all my old shyness that I could not bring myself to dine with him in his uncle's house. I went to see my cousins; their father was dead, and we mourned for him together. I left them a copy of *La Famille Vertueuse*.

I took the boat next day. The journey was dull until the last day when, as we were drawing near Paris, I had the adventure which is described in my *Pornographe* (Note (J), p. 355, 2nd edition), a very different affair from the one on my journey down! My life has been exceedingly varied!

On my arrival in Paris I went to the *Rue Traînée-Saint-Eustache*, where my wife was then living. We moved almost at once, that is to say, on the 15th of October, and went to live in the Rue Quincampoix in the house of Pernet the gunmaker. Here, during the last months of 1767 and the first of 1768, I wrote *La Confidence Nécessaire* and *Le Pied de Fanchette*, and made a fair copy of the first three volumes of the *Marquis de T**** or *L'École de la Jeunesse.*

We occupied the second floor and, on the second floor of a house opposite, there was a charming woman, at whom I could not look enough whenever she appeared at her window; she was my Muse, and the mere sight of her spurred me on to work. I always spoke of her as the Pretty Lady. Agnès Lebègue laughed at and made fun of me about her, and so did Mme Pernet and her mother. I thought my wife had her own reasons for this, and continued to look admiringly at my beauty opposite. She dressed simply but in excellent taste, and I would often say to myself: "How well everything becomes a beauty!" When I was making my final copy of that arid work *L'École de la Jeunesse* and my sluggish pen refused its office, I would raise my eyes. If I saw my Pretty Lady, fire coursed through my veins and I found, if not real virtue in the book, at least that some of the episodes were not without merit.

The Abbé Thomas gave me the foundation for *Lucille.* Here was no question of a novel, and as truth was like oil to my imagination, the sight of my Pretty Lady made my pen fly over the page. She it was who gave me energy to finish *La Confidence Nécessaire*, thrice abandoned for want of ideas. She also was my Muse for *Le Pied de Fanchette.* One holiday, after all these books had been completed, I sought to warm my chilled imagination with a nearer glimpse of my Pretty Lady. So, at the hour for Mass, I went out and stood in the doorway of the *Hôtel Beaufort*, by which she usually passed on her way to the little church of *Saint-Leu-Saint-Gilles.* She came downstairs; I watched her leave the house; my heart beat fast, and I prepared to devour her with my eyes. . . . She drew near. . . . If I had met her unwittingly at close quarters, I should never have recognised her. She was ugly . . . hideously ugly! . . . My illusion fell about my ears, the charm of the Rue Quincampoix was destroyed,* and I was obliged to seek my Muses at a distance. I found *Mme Lévêque*, daughter of Moreau of the Hôtel-Dieu and wife of a silk-merchant opposite the *Innocents*; and also pretty *Modeste* of the "Pink Slipper" in the Rue Tiquetonne. . . .

It was soon noticed at home that I was no longer always running to the window or talking about my Pretty Lady, and Mme Pernet, a very beautiful young woman whom I had unaffectedly placed below my opposite neighbour, offered to wager that I had never seen her close at hand. I said not a word. Another pretty woman, Mme *Saniez*, who used to visit us at this time, was acquainted with her and suggested that I should give her my arm to the beauty's apartment. I refused. Now I had never refused this woman anything. "He has seen her close to!" exclaimed young Pernet. Mme Saniez pretended to pout, and when I had settled down to work, she visited her friend opposite and persuaded her into coming, not to our apartment, but to that of Mme Pernet on the first floor. Here my charmer was told that there was a man on the second floor who adored her; they assured her that I could neither eat nor drink nor sleep, and implored her to give me a word of comfort. She needed a great deal of pressing, but at last she consented. I was called downstairs and introduced into the ladies' presence in the dim light of six o'clock on a March evening. Mme Saniez, who was a playful creature and felt safe in my complacence, briefly explained the compassionate motives which had prompted Mme *Ganery*, the surgeon's wife, to permit me to come down and see her. She told me that I need feel no shyness, as I was speaking to a woman who was as sensible as she was virtuous. If I could have seen distinctly, I do not think I could have fallen in with the jest; but the dim light restored all those charms which I had gazed upon from my window. So I played my part, getting upon my knees and taking her hand (which, however, I did not kiss), and I told my beads very well, seeing that I had only to throw myself back into my former state of mind. The three ladies had expected to make game of my embarrassment; on the contrary, it was they who were perplexed, so that none of them, not even my wife, knew what to think. I never satisfied their curiosity, and only now will they learn the truth: for they are all alive on this 18th of August, 1790.

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*I have more than once noticed that some women are charming at ten paces, and ugly near by. I remember a certain very pretty Mme de Vimes, who was usually seen about with a certain Mme Tarade; these two often used to make evening excursions to the old Palais Royal. At ten paces Mme Tarade was enticing, and even affectingly beautiful; and a half-light produced the same effect as distance, so that men who were not acquainted with the two ladies would often quarrel as to who should have Mme Tarade, and the most "important" among them would be the one to have her. But later, in the brighter light of a room, he would be cruelly disillusioned! All her supposed beauty lay in the shape of her face; her skin was livid and repulsive, whereas Mme de Vimes had a fresh complexion, etc.

I was now poorer than when I had been a foreman. The money which my *Famille Vertueuse* brought in quickly disappeared; my *École de la Jeunesse* was refused by the booksellers, and my *Pornographe* by the censor; and yet I was not disheartened! . . . It is the most astonishing thing about this period of my life, that when I was really without any resources I was neither depressed nor anxious on that account. *Guy* refused to print my *École de la Ieunesse*; instead of despairing, I wrote *Lucille* in five days. *Lucille* is the story, somewhat disguised, of Mlle *Cadette de Forterre*, who ran away with one of her father's clerks, Fromageot, a cooper's son. They were pursued and overtaken at Lille in Flanders, and the young lady brought back and later suitably married. It will be seen that I was no enemy to Mlle Cadette. I attempted to write this work in the manner of *l'Ingénu,* but one must be oneself and not another, even though that other be better a thousand times than oneself. In the same way I tried to imitate Mme Riccoboni in *La Famille Vertueuse.* In my subsequent books I did not imitate anyone, but I only began to follow my own manner freely in the *Paysan perverti.* I could get no more than three louis for my *Lucille,* and that from the Jew *Valade,* who then proceeded to print fifteen hundred copies instead of the thousand for which I had stipulated, so that I might hope for something on a second edition. Worse than this, he allowed it to be pirated in the provinces in exchange for a number of copies which he then sold in Paris, always keeping a few examples of the edition I knew about in stock to prove that this was not exhausted. This man, who was a tool of the police, made a fortune and died the day after! . . .

La Confidence Nécessaire depicts the state of my emotions when, in my early youth, I was in love with several girls at the same time. As a story it is not true, but it is a faithful picture of a real situation. This erotic production was not fortunate: it was refused by my first censor, the Abbé Simon; for some time I could find no buyer for it, and when I did, that knave and police spy Kolmann not only did not pay me for it, but wormed copies of three other books out of me to the value of more than a hundred crowns which I never received, because he died insolvent. M. Lebrun was my second censor for *La Confidence Nécessaire,* and afterwards for *L'École de la Jeunesse.* For *Lucille* I had M. *Delalaure.* This I wanted to dedicate to Mlle Hus in recognition of the pleasure her beauty had given me at the theatre. But the busybody *Delalaure* interfered and prevented her acceptance. Here is the letter which she wrote to me: "*Monsieur, please to believe that I found your book most agreeable, and am very sensible of the honour you would do me; but you will scarcely be surprised that I am unable to accept it.*

Though very charming, your novel is somewhat licentious in character, and this prevents anyone known to the public from allowing her name to head it. Therefore I beg you not to urge the point, and to believe that I am with great esteem, Monsieur, etc." It had been a great mistake in any case to offer Mlle Hus this dedication, since I had had one example of the book specially printed on Holland paper for Mme la Comtesse d'Egmont, thinking that my two novels made me worthy to be remembered by her, and it would have been very much more reasonable to have offered the dedication to this lady who would perhaps have accepted it. However, she never acknowledged her copy, and I fell a prey to anxiety. For there were two very dangerous men about at this time, *Richelieu* and *Fronsac*, and my nights (my work absorbed me in the day time) were tormented by the thought that I had given my address, and the fear of a sinister visit from velvet-footed *Dhemmery*! Although a fool, Delalaure had done me a real service, for my dedication was absurd; but he wished me no good. This man was imbecile in the morning, and drunk all the afternoon. One never knew when to call on him. What a censor!

Le Pied de Fanchette was my reaction to a vivid impression. I was walking down the Rue Tiquetonne one Sunday morning on my way to see Renaud, when I noticed a pretty girl in a milliner's shop at the corner of the *Rue Montorgeuil*, where there is now a coffee house. She was still in her simple bodice and with it she wore a white petticoat, silk stockings, and pink slippers with those high slender heels which become the female leg so infinitely better than the present fashion. I was enchanted and, stopping in front of the door, stared at her with my mouth open (her back was turned to me). At last one of her companions spoke to her, and she looked round blushing. "Gad, how appetising you are!" I said, and went my way. As I walked I wrote the first chapter of my book: "I am the true teller of the bright conquests of the darling foot of a fair lady," etc. The prose is poetic throughout. I put pen to paper the very next day. When I found my imagination cooling somewhat, I went out to look at my Muse again, but in the *Rue Saint-Denis*, near to the *Fontaine des Innocents*, I saw a woman whose feet were a prodigy of miniature beauty, and were moreover shod in pretty gold brocade slippers, made by the cleverest craftsman in the Capital. I followed her until she vanished into the church of the Sepulchre; then returned home full of inspiration and in two days had reached Chapter XIV. At this point I had a violent quarrel with Agnès Lebègue, but I must return a little to show what led up to this.

I have mentioned that I put my eldest daughter, Agnès, to board with Mlle Désirée's mother while my wife was selling muslins in the environs of Paris, and Mlle Désirée often had the child to her lodging. Now since her marriage with M. de Roncy had been broken off and death had robbed her of old Lefort, Désirée was inclined to gallantry. She had retained the old man's apartment and had taken a pupil called *Fanchonnette Giet*, whose uncle was courting her with a view to marriage. Désirée and Fanchonnette each had their own lovers, and it seems that one day, when they were both engaged with these, a third arrived who was syphilitic. Agnès was a beautiful child of five or six years, and apparently the wretch caressed her in a very intimate manner; no one knows how, but it is certain that after her return home she was tormented by a continual itch. Applications were made which drove the poison inwards, and seven or eight months later, while we were living in the Rue Quincampoix, pustules appeared all over the child's body. She slept in a little bed by the side of her mother's and the irritation caused her to toss about all night. At last her mother, out of all patience, ordered her to keep quiet. It was to ask the impossible. Then she gave the child a taste of the birch, and her cries awoke me. I fell into a terrible rage, and Agnès Lebègue sulked with me for several days, as was her custom after a quarrel. Now I can see that, as with Xanthippe, this fury's tempers taught me much; if she had been consistently good-tempered, I should never have known half of the useful things that I have put into my *Contemporaines* and other books. But at the time of which we are speaking they killed my inspiration, and the book which had begun so interestingly was continued amidst the distractions caused by spitefulness and tempers, and was in consequence incoherent, badly arranged and frequently padded out with stuff in which memory took the place of imagination. Still it was finished in twelve days. I did not offer it to any bookseller; M. de Crébillon the younger was the censor, and I printed it myself in the following August with the help of little Théodore, an apprentice who was put at my disposal, and whom I mention in *Le Paysan* and in *La Jolie Blanchisseuse.**

After the rapid composition of this book, written for my own pleasure, I made clean copies of *La Confidence Nécessaire* and of *Lucille*; then I returned to my *Pied de Fanchette*. M. de Sartine had read *Confidence Nécessaire* as *Confession Nécessaire*, and hence gave the book for censorship to the Abbé Simon, librarian to the Comte de Clermont, prince of the blood. No Abbé could approve of so wanton a romance. I took the book to him myself, posing as my own servant, and on our second meeting we discussed myself with extreme freedom, and I was forced into libelling myself. The Abbé sent my manuscript to *Marin*, police inspector of the book trade,

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*163rd *Contemporaine*, a charming *Nouvelle* by reason of its chastity, fidelity to contemporary manners, and a certain romantic charm.

meaning it to be suppressed; but this police censor kindly returned it to me, advising me to make some suitable changes. I have never had anything to complain of with Marin: he was a little abrupt and something of a Turk, but he was always kind to poor devils such as I, and I owe him all gratitude for it. He has been much abused! He is one of five prominent personages about whom I have heard much evil and in whom I have seen nothing but good: *Marin, Mairobert, La Reynière* the younger, *Beaumarchais,* and *Pelletier de Morfontaine.* The public is but a partial judge at times, allowing itself to be swayed by rumours put about by secret enemies!

Lucille was printed in May, and my three louis came very opportunely! The merchant Moulins, who had been away all the winter, returned and I had to give up my room, for which he was paying the rent. I took a lodging in a house in the Cour d'Albret kept by a grandmother, mother and two daughters. These women would only receive thoroughly steady men into their house, and then took upon themselves to keep them so by making it easy to be good. We used first to have the grandmother, a blooming woman despite her fifty years; then the thirty-five-year-old mother; then the elder daughter, who was eighteen, and last of all the younger one, a slip of a girl of fifteen. Valade's three louis kept me for four months at twenty francs a month. I took the ordinary at seven sous supplied by a cheap eating house kept by one *Guillaumot,* who had two charming daughters, and this served both for my dinner and supper; I drank water, and rationed my six-pound loaf so that it lasted a week. It was remarkable that I never once had indigestion on this diet, though my stomach had troubled me so much since 1764! I used sometimes to go and see Mauger, one of my old fellow-workers at the Louvre, a man in easy circumstances and with no children, and of the kind to force food upon a guest before he is well inside the house. Ill-nourished as I was at the inn, the smell of the boiling meat excited the keenest appetite; I ached for the good homely fare; and yet this man, who gave to everyone and had a hundred times forced me to sit at table with him, never once offered me a bowl of soup during this period of distress, of which he was unaware!

I began the printing of *Fanchette* in August, as I have said; F. A. Quillau still owed me four hundred livres, and this sum was set aside for the printing. Edme Rapenot, an old acquaintance of Auxerre whom I had met again in Paris at Claude Hérissant's, supplied the paper on condition that I paid him out of the first returns on the sales. I worked at the case from morning to night, revising my book as far as possible as I went along. . . . It appeared at Martinmas, just as *Lucille* was being published by Valade. *Fanchette* sold rapidly, and paid its cost in three weeks, so I settled with Rapenot. Then I sold the manuscript of my *Confidence* to Kolmann, and this also I printed with the help of Théodore.

While I was printing the *Confidence*, Edme Rapenot told me a moving story about a wealthy father who had given alms to his natural daughter without recognising her as such. This affecting incident fired my imagination and in six days, writing at a case in the printing room, I had composed and made a fair copy of my *Fille Naturelle*, in two parts: a masterpiece of speed and perhaps a masterpiece of pathos also! Unadvertised and unannounced, four editions of this little book were quickly sold, and it afterwards furnished me with two of the best *Nouvelles* in my *Contemporaines*: *La Sympathie Paternelle* and *La Fille Reconnue*. For the first time I had myself been moved while writing. Comparing this book with *Fanchette*, I was told: "*Le Pied de Fanchette* will sell more quickly, but *La Fille Naturelle* will sell longer." The two books were equally successful, and ran into the same number of editions; but I could not use *Le Pied de Fanchette* in my *Contemporaines.*

I left the Cour d'Albret at the end of the year, and Edme Rapenot housed me in a fifth floor room in the *Collège de Presle*, which he had on a lease. There, with four walls and a pallet bed (I had left what little furniture remained to Agnès Lebègue), I was light-hearted and industrious, with no ambition save to publish a book which would make me a name and win public recognition, so that Rose Bourgeois would read it. My only literary acquaintance was Progrès,* poor and disinterested as myself and as greedy for recognition, but more prone to intrigue. He was in touch with Audinot, who made him his prompter and paid him to write scenes for his wooden comedians; moreover, he had both the will and the effrontery to plagiarise. My way of living and working was certainly the better, but it was also the less profitable. The little man got dinners, actresses for his pleasure, tickets for the *Italiens*, etc. He laughed at me, and vaunted his slavery to the Boulevard mountebanks, boasting of that for which he should have blushed. He could not see that he was wasting his time, or that their company and the kind of work they gave him to do would superficialise his mind which was already frivolous enough. Yet this was obvious in his *Poétique de l'Opéra Bouffon*, his *Capucinade*, his *Mille et une Folies*, and his *Ainsi va le Monde*, which he composed while he was Audinot's prompter and during a term of three weeks' imprisonment in the Châtelet.

I finished printing *La Fille Naturelle* in October 1768. I still had the

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*Pierre-Jean-Baptiste Nougaret (1742-1823), whom Restif strangely chose for his "Aristarchus" at the outset of his literary career, and refers to in various parts of *Monsieur Nicolas* under the ridiculous names of "Progrès," "Gronavet," "Mamonet," etc., wrote a vast number of stories dealing with the gay life of his time in Paris; they seem to have been popular and many were translated into German. [Ed.]

revised manuscript (less the fourth part) of my *École de la Jeunesse*, but I had not the spirit to finish it. I put *Le Pornographe* in order and arranged to share the expenses of printing and the profits on it with a certain Michel, one of F. A. Quillau's journeymen. But let us leave my work for a moment, to say a word about my personal life since my ardent passion for the beautiful Rose Bourgeois.

On New Year's Eve, 1766, a fortnight after Rose's father had written me the letter I quoted above, I had four Almanacs bound, one *Des Muses*, and the three most interesting of the others. These I sent to M. Bourgeois by Théodore, who left the parcel according to my instructions. My present was not well received; it was returned to the address which I had previously given (Abbé Boulemiers, Collège de Justice) with this singular message, which I had had no reason to expect, since I had never called on M. Bourgeois for the excellent reason that I could not do so:

> *"If M. de la Bretonne is worthy to be received, why does he not venture to call in person? If he is not, his efforts to thrust gifts upon us are fruitless."*

To these four lines I wrote an eight-page answer which took me all night, and despatched it by Théodore. I have heard nothing of this family since. But one Sunday I met M. Bourgeois with a friend opposite the *Rue des Boucheries-Honoré*, quite near to his house. I gathered that he had been speaking of me from something that he said in answer to his friend: "No, he is the foreman." He must have said that I was a printer, and when his friend asked if I was my own master, M. Bourgeois answered that I was a foreman. Again, after Mlle Rose had married a man of Versailles, and Eugénie a tradesman to whom M. Bourgeois gave up his house, I happened to pass the shop and looked in. Eugénie's husband hurried up to me, saying: "What can I do for you?" I passed on without answering. I never saw Mlle Rose again, but I saw her sister in 1778, and the incident gave me a *Nouvelle.** Eugénie was holding her husband's arm, and there was a young man with them. They all three went into the house which used to be that Hôtel du Saint Esprit where I had lived with Boudard and Chambon, and I noticed that they occupied a room on the fourth floor. I made enquiries and was told that the little Parisian had dissipated his fortune, and would have been completely bankrupt had not Eugénie sacrificed her dowry of fifty thousand crowns to pay his creditors. She had no children, but perhaps M. Bourgeois's daughter would have made the same sacrifice had she had them. I was very much grieved by this news, and wished I could have been of some use to Rose's sister, the sweet, still pretty Eugénie, in her distress. I met her once more in 1781, carrying her own meat back from the butcher's. I dared not speak to her, and have always regretted this. I mean to repair my omission if I ever see her again. I have never heard anything of Mlle Rose, but to my dying breath I shall preserve those sentiments of respect and gratitude which I express in the 25th *Contemporaine.*

In November 1768, about ten years after dear Loiseau's death, my friend Boudard at last succumbed to chest disease. Boudard de la Grenouillère never married Mlle Mentelle, although he had the greatest esteem for her and Renaud urged him to do so. They had, however, one daughter who later distinguished herself as an actress, under the name of *Nibautanis*†; apparently they did not think she needed to be legitimised to shine upon the stage. Boudard made no will, as he only had a little furniture, and this he gave away. The inventory was taken at his sweetheart's house, to whom everything belonged. I was very busy at the time, doing everything for

*See the 25th *Contemporaine.*

† Saint-Aubin. [Ed.]

myself, copy and printing, and every minute was precious; also my presence was required for the revision of final proofs, the difficulties arising from my numerous corrections, etc., and I a little neglected Boudard's friend although I loved her tenderly. She was angry with me for this, and I lost sight of her and of her daughter, though I saw the latter again in 1789 at a supper given by an actor of the Théâtre Italien.

At the end of the year I made the acquaintance (through young Martinville, a relative of Agnès Lebègue) of a pretty girl who took up several of my half-days. She was *Élise Tulout.* We did not see much of each other at first, by reason of the little adventure which follows. But we were destined to form an uninterrupted friendship, and young Tulout (that same Élise, then little more than a child, to whom Mlle Ursule Meslot's brother-in-law had introduced me at the Porte du Pont, the day of my crowning in 1755) was to make one of the ten epochs in my life. I will insert these epochs here as I noted them, in this same year of 1790, on page 155 of my *Semaines Nocturnes*, a little work which forms the sequel to *Nuits de Paris*:

At six, *Agathe Tilhien*; at ten *Marie Fouard*; at fourteen *Jeannette Rousseau*; at eighteen *Mme Parangon*; at twenty-two *Zéphire*; at twenty-six I married, and then had *Nicard*; at thirty *Rose*, the celestial *Rose Bourgeois*; at thirty-four *Élise*; at thirty-eight *Louise* . . . Louise and *Thérèse*; at forty-two *Virginie*; at forty-six *Sara*; who terrified me, thus extending the interval by two years; at fifty-two *Félicité*, a delightful girl, something of a coquette but with decency; at fifty-six *Filette*; and at sixty the same. . . . That my life should have been divided into ten equal parts (if I allot Marie Piôt to my infancy) by this quaternary series, is most singular. But whom shall I have for my old age? I am finished, my soul is quenched, and I see no one who could revive its fires, although a woman moved me slightly yesterday, the

18th August, 1790. She lives by the first gateway, Rue Honoré, near to the Rue de Roule.*

After my return from Sacy and my residence in the Cour d'Albret, I went to board with Théodore's step-mother at four and a half francs the week. Théodore used to bring me my dinner on working days, and on Sundays and holidays I took my meals with his step-mother. He had a sister called *Manon*, and good Mme Théodore, who had married their late father because the mother of his two children was her friend, treated Manon, as far as her means permitted, with all the kindness that Mme Baron had shown to Madeleine and her sisters at Auxerre. . . . So there are some excellent women, even in Paris! . . . I took the greatest pleasure in being with this kind step-mother and her two children. Agnès Lebègue was busy with her muslins, and Edme, who owed me for some *Fanchettes* at the time, had put my eldest daughter with a friend of his, a Mme *Germain* of the *Carré Sainte-Geneviève*, where she was being treated for the skin trouble of which I have spoken. Mme Germain was a most extraordinary woman! She had two daughters, one as ugly as herself, and one of fourteen who was charming and of whom I shall have more to say later. Mme *Wallon* trusted me completely, and I fell in love with her little step-daughter, to whom I taught writing after dinner on Sundays. I moulded this child with the greatest ease, for her brother loved and respected me, and his sister conceived the same affection for me with an added tenderness. The little orphan became warmly attached to me,† and always greeted my

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*I feel to-day, the 25th of April, 1791, that the pretty clockmaker *Filette* (Rue Honoré, near by the Rue Orléans) will be my last love. If not it will be *Ædèl Togirém,*‡ the bookseller's daughter, *Quai de Voltaire*.

†We know that it was Manon Wallon who gave me my plot for the 63rd *Contemporaine*.

‡Adèle Mérigot [Ed.]

appearance with great and unaffected joy. She had a friend named *Colette*, a tall and pretty girl who, like Manon, was a laundress; she would sometimes come to help Manon, and Manon would do the same for her. Also she shared my little pupil's lessons (for though Manon was sixteen, in face and figure she looked no more than a child of eleven or twelve), and these two girls combined an unusual degree of penetration with the purest candour. Good Mme Wallon protected her step-daughter from the dangerous insinuations of other work girls by keeping her always with her, and Colette's aunt did the same for her niece; only together were the two girls left at liberty, with the result that they loved each other tenderly. Nothing would have been easier than to abuse their innocence. One Sunday, after our writing lesson was over, the four of us began to play at hide and seek, the two girls, Théodore, and I. When it was my turn to hide with Colette I could not withstand my longing to kiss her ardently, and far from resisting my caresses she responded to them. My senses are very inflammable; all principles deserted me. Colette made not the least difficulty; it was I who came to a halt, blushing for my misconduct, and I made this the occasion for some good advice. "Do you think I would have let anyone else do that?" she asked ingenuously. "But you can do anything you like. You are Théodore's master and friend, and the apple of his eye. He is to be my husband some day, and he told me that you were the only person of whom he was not jealous. He said that he could see you in bed with his mistress, his wife or his sister, and find nothing wrong. Only this morning he was saying with great emotion: 'Colette, my master is unhappy; he has been weeping on account of the trouble his wife gives him, and because his daughter is ill. Comfort him in any way he wants, for I have an idea which I will not conceal from you: I would love you all the more dearly if you became pregnant by him, because I should be so delighted that a child of his should call me father: one who would grow up clever like my master, and would be a credit to the Wallons, who have always been a bit stupid.' That is what he said. So do just what you like, for I feel the same way. My family, the *Borels*, have never produced a clever boy, and you will be doing me a great kindness." I was amazed at these words, for I was quite sure that Théodore had really spoken as she said. Such was the affection that I had inspired in this lad that he regarded me as the Manicheans regard their chosen. Thus also had Gaudet regarded me, and if I had wished I could have cruelly abused the idolatry of these devoted friends; yet I made no use of Mesmer's* methods – Mesmer, who was so shamefully slandered by Thouret. (It seems that Doctors of the Faculty are born enemies to every useful discovery; they make a recreation of opposing such, swearing, as they sit at table emptying their bottles, to pulverise the estimable inventor of some remedy, and often making this boast against their real convictions. Besides, this Thouret is thoroughly mediocre from every point of view; his mind is as superficial as that of the Abbé Aubert, his worthy echo. *Nota*: I have found out since that Mesmer was a knave; nevertheless Thouret passed judgment without enquiry.)

Manon was even more devoted to me than her brother, to whom I had taught his work and whom she loved as much as he loved her; that is to say, as orphans do love each other if they have noble natures. . . . One Sunday we were sitting together alone over our writing lesson, as Colette had not yet arrived, and I said to Manon: "What an amiable girl you are! You take everything I tell you in the most enchanting manner: you have an excellent disposition!" "No, I have not," she answered, nestling into my arms, "I am no better than anyone else, but my brother has given Colette and me an idea of his master that makes us love him more than anyone else in the world." My answer was to kiss her upon the mouth. "Ah, dear master," she exclaimed, "do not kiss me like that." "Why?" "Because I dare not return it." "Return it, I beseech you." "It would be disrespectful." "I should not find it so." On this she kissed me three or four times, which nearly cost her her innocence. But Colette came in and, witnessing the final kiss, smiled and came up to me, and I thought it wise to kiss her also to remove any suspicion from her mind that might be detrimental to Manon. She returned my kiss without apologising for the liberty.

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*Mesmer, a Viennese doctor who was a pioneer in the exploration of hypnotism, which was at first called after him, came in 1778 to Paris where his demonstrations had a mixed reception, and left when the Revolution broke out. He cannot be dismissed as "a knave" though much slandered during his lifetime, and his name lives while his academic opponents are forgotten. [Ed.]

Théodore, who knew how to read and write, was making out some bills for his stepmother in another room, and he came in just as I was kissing the two friends and praising their writing, for they worked very hard at it. "Love them dearly," he said to me, "if you want me to love them even more than I do already."

This agreeable pastime embellished my life during this year of 1768 when I was in the depths of poverty; for everything that the sale of my books brought in went to pay Edme Rapenot for paper and for my daughter's board. Kolmann paid me nothing, but Edme Rapenot gave me six francs a week which covered all my expenses, including washing. As I have said, Edme had given me a room in the Collège de Presle, and my rent, together with the paper for printing and the six livres a week, were included in his advance costs. I paid four livres and ten sous a week for my board: that left me thirty sous; I always provided a bottle of wine at ten sous for our Sunday dinner: that left me twenty sous; three sous for a shirt, one sou for a collar: that left me sixteen sous; of these I allowed myself four, and saved the remaining twelve in case of need or for an occasional visit to the theatre. I have never been so pinched for money, save during those three months in Paris after my return from Dijon.

I am happy to say that I respected Manon's innocence; but Colette. . . . It was she who provoked me, and I am very much tempted to believe, at Théodore's earnest request; for he married her pregnant, and cherished her most tenderly although she told him that her condition was due to "my labours" (her phrase). Therefore I am nearly certain that he made his marriage conditional on her complaisance.* I do not know what men and women of the world will think of this incident, which to my mind is all the more extraordinary because I can testify that Théodore is incapable of a base action; that his wife is the most honest woman imaginable; that they still adore each other after sixteen years of marriage; that the eldest son is equally beloved both by husband and wife, and by Manon, who for the past two years has been the best and most honest little housewife of the quarter; and finally that nothing but virtue is to be found in these two households. Théodore's extraordinary behaviour was entirely due to his admiration for me, which became more enthusiastic with the success of my *Fanchette* and *La Fille Naturelle*. Still more certain is it that I could have obtained anything I liked from Manon. She wept much before she could decide to marry (in 1772), and though she has not put her foot inside my doors since her wedding day, she came half a dozen times alone to my room in the Collège de Presle before it. I told her brother one day to ask her why I never saw her now, and she answered: "Tell our master that it is not for him to have another's leavings."

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*Thinking over Théodore's devotion to me, I believe that the chief cause of it was a correspondence I carried on with his godmother, Sister Sainte-Théodore, a nun of the Precious Blood in the Rue de Vaugirard. This excellent recluse spoke of me in the most flattering terms to him, and her words made a deep impression on an ingenuous and ignorant young man in a lowly position. If we examine the success of religious leaders, such as Mahomet and certain other founders of religious or monastic orders, and that of some philosophers also, we shall see that it is principally due to the personal attachment that they inspired in enthusiastic disciples. If I had had any convictions, which I had not, a little skill on my part and Gaudet and Théodore would have become assassins had I so commanded them. Oh, labyrinth of the human heart! Still more easily would these same men have made me proselytes among simple folk, seeing that one can be more persuasive for another than for oneself. A hundred years earlier I could have overturned the State. . . . There is nothing surprising about a certain type of success. It is merely the result of sympathy for an ambitious knave – which I was not.

I left these dear children in 1770, two years before Manon's marriage and a year after Théodore's, after a horrible mischance from which they would have saved me. Leaving these kindly creatures was one of the greatest mistakes I ever made; but I had a wife and three children (Élisabeth was still alive), and my conscience was not easy. Agnès Lebègue had not so far openly wronged me in any of those ways which can never be forgiven, and I went back to her directly she seemed to wish it. Each time I left her it was at her own request and for reasons which she convinced me were excellent. I had lost my friend Boudard, but two others still remained to me, Renaud and Gaudet. The former was grave and melancholy since the loss of Mme Deschamps, and preached steadiness at me unceasingly. Yet he was no harsh critic of my books; almost he admired them and he sang their praises. When *Le Pornographe* appeared he embraced me, saying: "A book at last, and not another pamphlet!" He wept over *La Fille Naturelle*, exclaiming: "O Loiseau, where are you?" He wept and laughed over *Fanchette*, and liked *La Confidence Nécessaire*. In a word this friend would never flatter me, but at the same time he treated me with the sweet indulgence of affection. Distrust over-harsh criticism; it means dislike. . . . But he was very much attracted by Agnès Lebègue, and this was a misfortune for her and for me. If we had separated then we should both have been better people.

As for Gaudet, he lived in quiet happiness with Manon, having given up all thought of debauchery. It will be remembered that a relative of Manon, who had remained a bawd, had stolen Zéphire's daughter. I had been told the child was dead, but during this period chance led me to her. Colette's mother washed for the "street"; some linen was stolen from her, and Manon's cousin came round to make a fuss about it, bringing Zéphirette, now thirteen years old, with her. The child chatted to Colette and Manon, who admired her looks while commiserating with her on having such a wicked mother. "She is not my mother," answered the girl. "I know that from my foster-mother. I am the daughter of Monsieur Gaudet, a pastrycook." The two girls repeated this remark to me, and I took la Guérin's address; and Gaudet, his wife, his sister and myself, all went there together. Manon made her cousin confess everything, took back the child and, as Gaudet let it be supposed that she was his daughter, she became his heiress. When he left the Capital, he sent her, unknown to me, to live with Victorine, Mme Guisland's daughter. . . . We shall hear about her marriage in 1775.

It was at this time that, troubled by what I had seen, I removed my daughter Agnès from Mme Germain to reunite her with her mother, and myself took my meals with Agnès Lebègue who was stationary in Paris now that Moulins had returned to Macon. She still had a certain amount of stock, and I gave her what I received from *Gauguery*, the bookseller who had bought the rest of my *Fanchettes*. With this she bought up the home of a painter in the *Rue de la Veliile-Bouclerie* and took possession of his lodging, which was in the house of the elder *Valeyre*, a printer. . . .

But I must return to the printing of my *Pornographe*, and give an account of my literary work up to the month of May 1770; then I will go back to my life with Agnès Lebègue, from the return of the merchant Moulins from a visit to his native province up to this man's final departure.

At the beginning of 1769, after the printing of *La Fille Naturelle*, I got seriously to work on my *Pornographe*. I had indulged in debauchery with Gaudet, as will be remembered; I had known Zéphire's mother, Aurore, Bathilde the Alsatian, Sailly, the girl of the Jeu de Boule, La Macé, Sara Krammer, La Piron, etc., etc., so that I was sufficiently acquainted with the abuses, the disadvantages and the customs of these women, and the most efficacious ways of introducing order into disorder in spite of the police inspectors, to whose interest it was that these abuses should continue. I will not describe the contents of this book in detail, seeing that several editions of it are extant, and it is easily obtainable by my readers. I will only say that it is perhaps the most useful of all the schemes for moral reform suggested to the Government, and the one which demands the promptest execution.* After three months work upon my old manuscript, which I entirely rewrote, the book was again handed in for censorship, and was again refused by a certain *Philippe de Prétot*. Through Valade's influence I then got a M. *Marchand*, who initialed it and gave a favourable report of it to the lieutenant of police *de Sartine*. It was printed during

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*His Imp. Maj. Joseph II saw this clearly, for he put my suggestions into execution in Vienna,† after reading a digest of them in the *Gazette de Leyde*, December, 1786.

†Restif often refers to the adoption in Vienna by the Emperor Joseph II of the proposals for regulating prostitution which he had set forth in *Le Pornographe*; there was not the slightest ground for this belief. [Ed.]

April, May and June; but just as it was going to be put on sale, F. A. Quillau, on the advice of my successor, Domenc, made some remarks about it to the censor, which very nearly led the latter to rescind his approval. Thus the stupidity of these two men, F. A. Quillau and Domenc, almost prevented the publication of a valuable work, and one which had already been printed at a cost of twelve thousand francs. Quillau and Domenc were my copyists and not my censors, and as such only had the right to demand that the original should be well and duly initialed; but Quillau did not understand his trade any better than the other thirty-six Paris printers; these gentry thought themselves the author's master, whereas they are merely his secretary. M. Marchand was brought to reason with the help of M. *Pasquier*, and the book was passed. But I admit that I have never since been able to see F. A. Quillau in a favourable light, nor his foreman* either, for they acted secretly and as though it were important that I should not know what they were doing. Later F. A. Quillau took upon himself the duties of a police inspector by appropriating editions from which certain passages had to be expunged, and tearing out the banned passages himself at the works, an odious function which devolved on *Dhemmery*, *Goupil, Leprince* or *Henri*, and on them only. The printer is not a policeman; he prints under authority, and if excisions are made, he prints accordingly and delivers the work; his duties are then fulfilled. But so many men are slavish and degraded!

When (thanks to the good sense of my censor) I had extricated myself from the difficulties which F. A. Quillau's ignorance had caused me, I began work upon my *Mimographe*, upon which I was engaged during the

*The latter died on the 27th November, 1786, as ignobly as he had lived. All the same I owed him a breakfast and an agreeable morning with pretty Mlle *Lallemand* the younger, now the wife of a grocer opposite the *Puits-certains*.

summer of 1769. I printed it myself with the help of Michel, as I had *Le Pornographe.* In the meantime the latter book went so well that the bookseller *Delalain* the elder told me that he *sold nothing else* during the summer of 1769. Yet this same Delalain, in order to increase his profit by selling to private customers only, said to the other booksellers with whom he dealt: "That book? Rubbish! It was written by that foreman fellow!" As though a foreman must necessarily write a bad book. It was detestable ingratitude to a man who earned him a profit of more than a thousand crowns, and that without his incurring any risk, seeing that he held the books on sale or return. This is the kind of thing which has so often disgusted authors with booksellers; which made them take the part of that intriguer *Luneau de Boisgermain* in 1771, though he was acting in direct opposition to the interests of literature; which made M. *Fenouillot de Falbaire*, a clever man had his mind been better balanced, write his *Avis aux Gens de Lettres*, which I thought it my duty to answer in 1772, thereby incurring the implacable enmity of the police official Desmarolles. And what harm that man has done me! First he stopped my *Lettres d'une Fille à son Père*, which included my *Contr'avis aux Gens de Lettres*; then *Le Ménage parisien*, and finally *L'École des Pères. Le Paysan perverti* escaped him, but I had to visit the police seventy-two times about it, and only extricated myself from his hands by bribing him. . . .

The printing of *La Mimographe* gave me infinite trouble! The difficulty of the subject-matter necessitated changes which I made myself in case, and I worked for more than six months without earning a penny, because Michel refused to share the expenses of this operation. Whatever partner he may choose, a man of letters is always being betrayed by people who do not understand the difficulties of his task. The printing was finished in

March of the year following, 1770, and the book was on sale by Easter. I was ill at the time (as I shall be telling shortly) and asked Michel for an advance of fifty livres on my share of the profit on *Le Pornographe*, which totalled more than three thousand livres. He refused them, and I was so indignant that I immediately demanded the four hundred copies not yet sold, as my share. I transferred these to Edme Rapenot, who was solvent at the time and gave me bills for fourteen hundred and twenty-five livres, dated so far ahead that they have never been paid. I got nothing out of *La Mimographe* either. I sold four hundred copies to Edme Rapenot and sent three hundred to the *Société Typographique de Bouillon.* These seven hundred copies were my whole share, and I never got a penny for them! Michel persuaded me to sell the remainder of my editions of *Fanchette* and *La Fille Naturelle* to the bookseller Gauguery, and I was never paid for these either, because he went bankrupt. He left effects to the value of two thousand and thirty livres, and I was allotted so much in the livre, but Citizen Leclerc, the master bookseller, so arranged matters that the creditors did not get a farthing. It was the custom of this Leclerc to cheat booksellers' creditors.* This same Michel made me sell my manuscript of *L'École des Pères* to Drastoc† at a sou the page, and this bookseller never paid me. Luckily it was Michel who chose all these people, with the exception of Edme Rapenot; but if he had been fair, or had even known where his own interests lay, Rapenot would never have had the chance to

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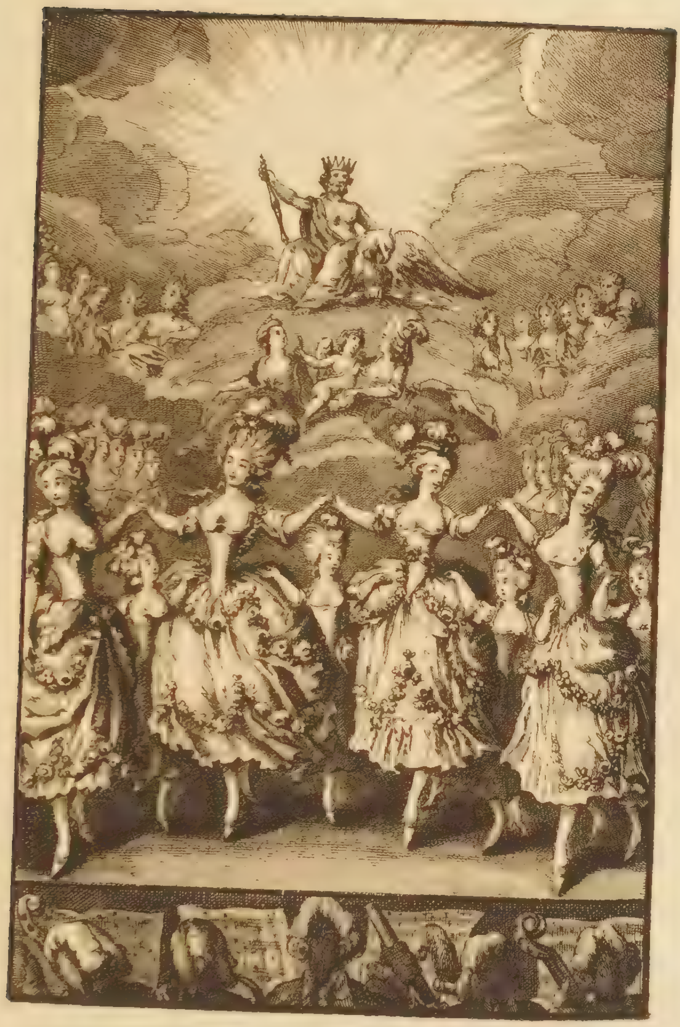
*Nevertheless this Leclerc was a veritable god of honesty among booksellers compared with *Reinruof*‡ of the *Rue de Hurepoix* and later of the *Rue Notre Dame.* This wretch stole fourteen to sixteen thousand francs from Edme Rapenot; double that sum from Drastoc's creditors, and from myself in particular all that remained of *L'École des Pères* when Drastoc was sold up, that is to say, paper to the value of about two thousand livres.

†Costard. [Ed.]

‡Fournier. [Ed.]

cheat me, as I should not have been in a position to sell, and then Michel would have made a fortune out of me. Up to this time I had been in Rapenot's debt. He held a note against me for seven hundred livres, on account of my eldest daughter's board with La Germain (which alone amounted to four hundred livres) and for my subsistence, and this debt I paid off in instalments by assigning the profit on my *Fanchette* to him. But as I only gave him a little at a time, he kept my note of hand, giving me receipts for what I paid; and this unlucky bill, which he retained, cost me sixteen hundred livres in 1778, the year of his death. He presented it at the *Consuls*, as against his own bills of a later date, and through Leclerc's influence and by default obtained judgment to pay. The case was handed over to Leclerc for arbitration, and the whole thing should have been decided on presentation of my receipts; but it was not his custom to put one of his colleagues in the position of debtor and he dragged the business out. Edme Rapenot went mad, died insolvent, and I lost everything; at a most inopportune moment, for I was asking no more of my old comrade Edme than some reams of paper which he was leaving to rot. In spite of Reinruof's* thefts and those of the broker *Batiliot* and of *Marigny*, one of the President's stewards, who was also a money-lender and pawnbroker, etc., Edme left paper to the value of twenty-five thousand livres; but a certain *Vaufrouard*, a parliamentary attorney who also practised money-lending on a capital of six thousand livres, saw to it that everything went to the lawyers, with the connivance of one of his colleagues and a member of his family, who owed him six thousand francs and liquefied this debt out of his share of the plunder. I not only lost my profit on the sales of *Le Pornographe*, which amounted to fourteen hundred and twenty-five livres, but all that

*Fournier. [Ed.]



was still due on *La Mimographe*; this through the knavery of a process-server, *Champion*, who had charge of the bills due to me and contented himself with threatening distraint once a fortnight, in order to be paid four and a half livres (which was always promptly handed over) to go away.

The first two volumes of my *Idées Singulières* were finished at the beginning of April 1770. I had just signed my contract with Drastoc and was working on *L'École des Pères*, when that mishap befel me which was to poison the remainder of my life. I have sworn to tell the truth; I must tell it, and I shall tell it. But I must interrupt the story of my literary labours to return to my personal adventures and describe a mishap which, at one blow, put an end both to the former and the latter.

I had passed the last eight months of 1768 in the Cour d'Albret, and during this time I received a visit from *Martinville*, a distant cousin of my wife and a travelling salesman. He mentioned that his cousin Élise Tulout, an intelligent girl, was very anxious to make my acquaintance after reading *La Famille Vertueuse*. I let him take me to see her. This was about four years after Mlle Rose had first impressed me and, as I have observed above, I conceived a passion every four years. (I know not what is in reserve for me to-day, the 24th August, 1784.*) At first sight of Élise Tulout I was struck by something delicate, intelligent and distinguished in her appearance.

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*I was too overwhelmed with difficulties; but in 1786, just four years after my final rupture with Sara on the 23rd of July, I was strongly attracted by Mlle *Félicité Mesnager*. I will not mention Mlle Londeau in this connection; I have held her in the highest esteem for fourteen years. I keep out of danger by avoiding the women who might attract me, or by preaching virtue to them, so as to make it impossible for me to talk to them of other matters. . . . However, I feel that if Victoire Londeau would lend a favourable ear to me, I should adore her in spite of myself. Luckily she has been prejudiced against me, since the publication of my *Nouvel Abeilard*, wherein she is the heroine of my *second modèle*, and fate so far favours my intentions that I am unable to approach her. . . . (I spoke to her for the first time on the 26th March, 1787, again on the 2nd June, 1788, etc. Now she is Mme Poulet.)

She was about eighteen years old. I read her my *Pied de Fanchette*, which had not then been published, and she made some very judicious criticisms, but unfortunately the book was already printed. We agreed that on my next visit, when I should be alone, I should bring the proofs of *La Fille Naturelle.* Thus our intimacy grew, and after a long and strenuous day I would visit Élise to find relaxation in her talents and her wit. She sang to me, accompanying herself on the zither; she made music; we read and talked; we dissected the human heart in the course of long and delightful interviews. The questions of this admirable girl were extremely valuable, forcing me to examine into myself and take soundings of my ability.* Élise was not yet an unbeliever; she wanted to be for excellent reasons, but dared not. Thus we used to engage in metaphysical discussions which would last the whole afternoon; and these gave rise to those *Entretiens du Curé de Sacy*, which are to be found in a hundred copies only of *L'École des Pères.* Insensibly matter mixed with mind, as Élise was passionately addicted to a certain topic: how she should behave to make her husband happy. And the manner in which, in this connection, she would make me happy gave me one of the most extraordinary experiences I have ever had. I did not know whether she was a virgin; but she was full of sentiment and very tender! In describing her conduct with her future husband (whom I could not take to be myself, as she knew I was married), Élise illustrated her remarks upon my person. I was like a doll in her hands. At last one evening, at fall of day, she went to such lengths that, despite my principles, I was deeply stirred! I expected a young girl to repulse the advances of a married man. Not in the least. While telling me that she meant

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*See her letters in the *Malédiction Paternelle.* They are pure Élise; I have not changed a single word. (See also the play entitled "Élise" in the *Drame de la Vie.*)

to be very fond on such occasions, Élise not only abandoned herself to me but seconded my efforts with enthusiasm. It was delicious. . . . When we had recovered ourselves Élise said to me calmly: "See how fond I would be! . . ." I did not then know that she loved me – I had begun to give up hope of ever being so again – and never found this out until a long time afterwards!

My interviews with Élise were admirably instructive, and I used them to good purpose in my *Contemporaines*, amalgamating them with my own experience. Here we have fresh proof of my contention that I owe nearly everything to women; and it is a fact that, though they can never be men, it is they who form men physically as well as morally.

I was a somewhat better man then than now, more virtuous and more faithful to my principles (for in the incident I have just described I succumbed to an irresistible charm), more respectful of my quality as author. (Unhappy, all of us! Age makes us no better; the season of the body's strength is virtue's prime; and if the old seem to lead better lives, this appearance is deceitful; they are only weaker. There is but one way to make them virtuous and that is to give effect to the scheme proposed in my *Anthropographe*, and make old age respectable.) One evening when I went to see Élise (whom I used to visit twice a week) she was not in; and as I perforce turned my steps homewards, two tears ran down my cheeks. . . . "Tears! Tears!" I exclaimed. "Would Love ensnare me and plunge me once again into the torments I endured for Mlle Rose Bourgeois! Flee, and never see this amiable girl again! . . . Shall I, without bread or money, add the pains of love to my misfortunes? . . . Farewell, dear Élise (for I see that you are dear to me), I shall never see you again! . . ." And I had the strength to visit her no more. We wrote to each other, and were to write again, as you shall hear. Also we were to meet once more in 1772; and when I come to the year 1777 I may perhaps quote a passage from my *Malédiction Paternelle*, containing our story and my correspondence with Élise, or rather I will supplement this.

Here it is necessary to insert a singular episode, as bearing on the development of the human heart. . . . My compositor at Quillau's for *L'École de la Jeunesse* (in 1770, after I had stopped seeing Élise) was young Fournier, the son of an Auxerre printer; not the one who at present owns the place, but his elder brother. He was well enough to look at, and as we were working side by side upon my book, we often talked together. As the son of an owner printer, he had a better position than the other workmen; he often took his meals with F. A. Quillau and used to play cards with him. Early in 1768, that is to say, two years previously, one of Quillau's friends had married *Javote Tarref*,* the tall and pretty daughter of a bankrupt wine merchant. Her mother, a born intriguer, had found means to bring about the marriage. We were then in the prime of our age and virtue, F. A. Quillau and I. The former's friend scrupled, as an honourable man, to make so pretty a girl his concubine after he had enjoyed her, unaware that she had already been kept and deflowered by another, and had also had a love affair with an attorney's clerk named Toledob,† a native of Auxerre. Therefore he married her a year after I resigned my foremanship, and was still a bridegroom in September 1768 when I was working at Quillau's on my *Pied de Fanchette*. At this time his young wife seemed both fond and modest, and she presented her husband with a boy who really was the son of his father. Two years passed harmoniously enough. Javote Tarref was no flirt, but her husband's verbal freedoms, a bad habit acquired in the printing

*Javote Ferrat. [Ed.]

†Bodelot. [Ed.]

room, inured her to indecent phrases; and words lead to deeds. However, she was still a good girl in Martinmas, 1770; I often used to talk to her and always treated her with every respect. During the vintage of that year her husband went to stay in Auxerre with his friend and predecessor Toledob; so Fournier and I would often go to keep sweet Javote company, but as I had work to do, Fournier would often find himself alone with her. This young man was even more virtuous than we were, because he was younger; for the same reason Quillau was more virtuous than I. One evening when they were talking alone together after supper, this lady, whose married name I will not disclose,* put her hand upon her companion's closely fitting breeches, and the heat of this pretty hand soon communicated itself to nature's executant. His emotion was perceptible and, quite beside herself (for she had an excellent appetite), she threw her arms about his neck and with her burning lips sought his. . . . Fournier, being very green and still a virgin, was himself so much moved that he fainted, no doubt from pleasure. . . . He could do nothing. . . . I do not know how I came to drop in that evening to say good night to Javote, as I had not called on her for two days. Fournier left the room looking very pale. . . . I smiled. . . . "He is not strong," said the lady. When he had finally left the house I sat down by my friend, who was staying at the time with Mme Quillau. "Young men are sometimes very strange," she said. "Give me maturity!" It seemed a curious remark. We began to discuss love, a topic I have always treated ardently. She put one arm about my neck and drew my head down upon her breast. I was amazed! She rose. "I feel giddy!" she said, leaning against the bed. I went over to support her, and she fell back upon it. "I do not feel well. . . . I must have it! . . ."

*But he does disclose it a little later. [Ed.]

This I understood, and, moved beyond my power to resist, I possessed one of the prettiest and best made women that ever existed. . . . She wept after the business, saying that she loved and cherished her husband, but could not go without for a week. She asked my forgiveness on her knees, and I understood what that meant also. So I promised to be discreet and never to mention the matter unless she went astray again. She promised to be good, and asked me to administer a second dose of goodness if her husband stayed away for more than another week. . . . I gave it to her on the spot without prejudice to the future (what a disastrous example for young Quillau!), and she exclaimed: "Ah God, what a lance!"

Next day Fournier could not resist describing his adventure as I have related it. . . . He told me that the struggle between the fear of sin and his burning desires had caused his swoon, and that he would never run such a risk again. I fortified his good intentions, not through hypocrisy but in his own interest. That evening Mme L.'s mother was keeping her company, so we did not call, but had supper together in my room at the Collège de Presle and went for a walk afterwards. As we were going down the *Rue Vieux Augustins*, a pretty girl twitched Fournier by the coat. I had not noticed her, but a carriage passed and Fournier had disappeared. I returned home alone.

At the printing shop next day he related his adventure. "I am no longer a virgin," he said, "and you are the cause. It was you they wanted; the young girl who pulled my coat made a mistake. A woman who used to sell salt on the Pont Saint-Michel, opposite André Knapen's place, wants to introduce you to a girl of nine or ten who, she says, is your daughter." At once I remembered the pretty salt seller, her sister, and the night I had spent in the Rue Macon. "Finding myself with women of your acquaintance," Fournier resumed, "and pretty ones at that, to whose virtue I could do no harm, I decided to break the spell, and took the elder sister of your daughter's mother. I confessed my lack of practice, so she taught me the business, and I am under an obligation to her for her kindness and her patient skill. No one could ever have had as much pleasure as she gave me." I listened to Fournier with some pain, reflecting that with young Mme Lacroix on the one hand, and on the other the facile pleasures provided by a prostitute, he would infallibly come to ruin.

I was not mistaken. I had pretty Lacroix again once or twice during this period; but when Fournier was next alone with her he did not miss fire. It was her first real lapse since marriage, for I had only been a stop-gap, favoured for my temperament and not my heart. She ruined the lad by blunting his sensibilities and, after her husband's return, by giving him a taste for gambling. Both of them went rapidly down hill. Young Lacroix took lovers directly friends who were at all select began to visit her house. She did not like refusing anyone, and ended by becoming a whore. Since then she has tried to seduce clerks from every office, Neville, superintendent of the book trade, and even police officers. Later she had her lacquey, *Lajeunesse*, then a jockey called *François*, who used to massage her in her bath. . . . I shall mention her again in 1776. Fournier developed into a gambler and even a cheat under the influence of Mme Lacroix, who herself cheated shamelessly at cards, and shortly after went to the *Académies* where, from the most virtuous of young men, he became the most disorderly. Often in the course of 1771 (during which he was working on my *Nouvelle Émile* or *L'École des Pères*) I would remonstrate and reason with him; but one interview alone with pretty Lacroix undid all my work. However, she could not keep him, for directly she found people who paid her well she had to banish him so as not to excite their jealousy. He was dismissed in 1772.

One of our visitors at this time was a tall girl named Jeanneton, who procured work for my daughters Agnès and Marion in millinery and lacemaking. She was much respected, although she was only a laundress. Fournier met her at our house after he had been driven away by the fair Lacroix, and fell desperately in love with her. In her own way this girl was a second edition of Javote Lacroix; she was kind to such a point that one day, when I was standing behind the window curtain with her, she offered me the ultimate favour to console me after a quarrel with Agnès Lebègue. I took no notice. . . . Fournier lived with her and gave her a child, and was thereby introduced to a crapulous society from which he never extricated himself. He is now a foreman at Nantes, while his younger brother occupies his place in Auxerre. But I must return to what concerns Agnès Lebègue.

When I left my kindly hostesses of the Cour d'Albret, I did not return to Agnès Lebègue's apartment, but went to live in the Collège de Presle. This was at the beginning of 1769. Meantime Agnès stayed on in the Rue Quincampoix with Moulins's stock. The merchant finally left Paris about July, and as Agnès Lebègue was not very economical she found she owed him money. He took away all our furniture in payment of the debt, so she let the best room, which was completely stripped, and retired to my little room at the back. Thus our fortunes did not improve; on the contrary. Nevertheless I am under an obligation to Moulins for making it possible for me to give up printing, for this was killing me. But I paid dearly for it! Agnès Lebègue, whose heart was easily won, was brought to bed twice of twins here, in whom, I am certain, I had no part; indeed both she and the merchant were so sure of this that they sent these four children to the *Foundlings* without consulting me. Personally I had nothing to complain of, but when I heard about it by chance, I infinitely despised Moulins. Moreover, the contempt which my eldest daughter has always had for her mother originated in this intrigue, which she made no effort to conceal from the child; and for this reason I have at times excused her for her want of filial respect. But in this I carried justice to excess, because, when she knew better, my eldest daughter should have realised that she had no right to be disrespectful to her mother ten years later, and disobey her, because she suspected her of having led an irregular life; and this only to be free of a woman whose acid temper made her company intolerable. I admit that, though I had my suspicions, I shut my eyes to Agnès Lebègue's conduct, as I was too poor and too busy to bring her to reason. However, I did just touch on the subject when, after Moulins's departure, I found she was doting on the clock-maker *Admiraut*, but she only answered haughtily: "Go back to your printing then and provide for me." I was not in a position to go back to printing, and anyway I felt the greatest repugnance for it, so I held my tongue.

With the printing of my *Pornographe*, I could count on fifteen hundred francs, so I took back Agnès Lebègue to live with me. She had the greatest difficulty in getting away from the Rue Quincampoix, as Pernet, the landlord, wanted to make us responsible for the woman to whom she had sublet the best room. He appealed to Commissary *Delaporte,* who wrote me a note in these terms:

> *"The man named Nicolas is summoned to appear at the office of Commissary Delaporte to-morrow between seven and eight o'clock, when he will hear something which concerns him."*

I wrote three answers to the Commissary in the course of the day, which I despatched by Théodore. Inwardly I said: "He addresses me as though he were aware of my extreme poverty." I appeared before the Commissary in the *Rue aux Ours* at the hour mentioned, and was civilly received. He heard me out and then wrote an order in his own hand, instructing Pernet *not to keep the passage door locked, or to demand that I should be responsible for the woman my neighbour, seeing that, in the absence of a lease, I was not authorised to sublet.* Pernet obeyed in part. The day we moved he stopped my furniture from going out; but Commissary Bourgeois, who lived still nearer to us than his colleague, ordered him to let me pass and to receive my rent. For her part, our tenant maintained that she was solvent, etc. We escaped at last with the help of the clock-maker *Admiraut,* who took our part energetically. The same day we were installed in my big garret on the fifth floor of the Collège de Presle; I put my folding bed in a little closet, and Agnès Lebègue hung our old carpet in front of her bed, forming a sort of alcove such as is found amongst the very poor. Thus we were lodged rent free. It was in this closet, which my bed exactly filled, that I wrote my *Lettres d'une Fille à son Père* and the first two volumes of *Le Paysan perverti.* I worked from daylight until three o'clock, dined before I got up, and for the rest of the day read proofs for *Humblot* and *Ganneaux,* booksellers, or worked at the printer's on my *Mimographe.* While I was leading this busy life in the very depths of poverty I conducted myself like the most disinterested of men. During this time, with no one else to turn to, I avoided a pretty and modest girl, who attracted me and with whom I could have tasted delicious pleasures, for virtue's sake! Yet it was only because I had not a moment to spare: what time had I to give to sensual pleasures? . . .

I have concealed nothing, honest Reader. You know everything I have done; I have not suppressed a single action. Some of them were bad; you have heard and judged. Now I ask you if, after all that you have read, I am what you would call a libertine, a man devoid of morals? As I cannot hear your answer, I will put myself in your place and reply as though you were questioning me: "No, no, I am not a libertine." It needs the habit and the love of debauchery to make a libertine; the term cannot be applied to a busy man who, throughout his life, has done the work of two men; one who is carried away by his passions at times, but has always been recalled to duty – by lack of means if reason failed. But his reason also has recalled him; and the proof of this is that, in spite of ardent passions, he has always disdained the baser means of satisfaction and, far from seeking such, has repulsed them when they offered. You have seen this for yourself, honest Reader, and must judge accordingly what happened in this same year, 1769.

One evening I encountered a well dressed girl in the neighbourhood of the Opera, and was so struck by her likeness to Fanchonnette, Mlle Desirée's niece by marriage (the latter had married *Giet* a year before), that I followed and accosted her. Her conversation confirmed me more and more in my belief that she was Fanchonnette. So I went up to her apartment, convinced that she was pretty Giet, and curious to see what would happen. She would not have a light, and this made me surer that my supposition was correct. . . . I fell completely. . . . In chatting afterwards I happened to mention my *Pied de Fanchette.* She had read it, and I confessed to being the author so as to make her talk about it. She showed no surprise, but only said: "So you are the author of *Le Pied de Fanchette*! . . ." Then I was so certain that she was Fanchonnette that I asked news of her aunt as I was leaving. "I never see her now," answered my new Giet. "We have quarrelled on account of her misconduct." This left me with no doubts but that I had possessed

Fanchonnette. It was ten o'clock at night, and I went home. Next day I was obliged to go out at six o'clock, and met Fanchonnette in the Rue Saint-Jacques: she was dressed in work-a-day clothes and looked different from the girl I had seen the day before; but the face and figure were the same, so I bowed, and she blushingly returned my salutation. . . . I was unable to go that evening to No. 14, Nouvelle-Halle, where I had seen her the day before, and did not return until nine o'clock the evening after. She was not at home, but she came in a quarter of an hour later, and I followed her upstairs. She lit a candle, and then I saw that she was not Fanchonnette, but another girl exactly like her. I told her what I had thought and done, and she laughed, but a little absent-mindedly. I quoted a similar case, that of Mlle *Leduc*, the daughter of a merchant who sold the wines of Mount Sainte-Geneviève, and *La Dubois*, a prostitute, who were so exactly like each other that a young man accosted the former in broad daylight, mistaking her for La Dubois, and it was some time before the mistake was explained. *Victoire* (for that was the name of the girl at Number 14) then said that she trusted me and would tell me who she was: "I am an attorney's daughter. Having quarrelled with my parents and left them, I took to this life because there was nothing else I could do and I prefer anything, even death itself, to the idea of returning home. I only go out at evening, and always wear a calash (as when you first saw me) to avoid recognition."

She risked little by this confidence, as she told me nothing more. As a matter of fact I could see from her conversation that she had not been bred in the gutter, as were most of these girls. She talked amusingly and I left her well satisfied; however, it was some time before I called again, and then the woman who had taken her room told me that Mlle Victoire was living over a dairy in the Marais, Rue *Saintonge*. I went there in search of her; and, as I was scanning the street attentively, she appeared in an elegant toilet at a window. I recognised her at once, but before going upstairs to her (it was a Sunday in the month of September), I wrote upon the wall of a terrace garden opposite: *1769, 8 7bris, Victoria visa.* When I went up she received me as an old friend. *Le Pied de Fanchette*, then newly published, was beside her, and she was reading *La Princesse de Clèves*; she lent me the latter book, and I left her *La Fille Naturelle.* She was charming that day; I could have thought myself with Élise, whom I had not seen for more than eight months. After a lively conversation Victoire exhibited her brilliant talent for dancing: I might have been watching *Allard.* While she was still on her toes, she said: "I know another dance!" and came to me. She displayed an unusual breeding, which inspired my respect in spite of her status; and she used no indecent means to excite me to possess her.

I did not see her again until I called to return her book at the end of a week, and her servant greeted me by saying: "She is awaiting you impatiently." Victoire uttered a cry of joy on my appearance, beckoned me to her without rising, and received me in her arms. "To whom did you lend *La Fille Naturelle* before leaving it with me?" "To a Mademoiselle Élise." "Is this note from her?" "Ah, I never saw it! Yes." "Then you are the author of *La Fille Naturelle*?" "But . . . yes." "And consequently of *Le Pied de Fanchette* also?" "I told you that before." "I misunderstood you. . . . You are a man I have longed to meet! Let us have dinner together. . . ." The dinner was pleasant enough, but afterwards it was divine! . . . Victoire brought all that is most exquisite in the voluptuous art to bear upon me, prolonging my enjoyment for three hours. . . . The Gods in Olympus may know the sensations she procured me, but they know none more voluptuous! The crisis came at last. . . . In all my life I have never experienced its like. . . . I was another *Renaud* in the arms of his *Armide.* . . . Afterwards Victoire told me again that she was an attorney's daughter, adding that she had been educated in the Convent of *Panthémont,* had fled from her father's house to avoid marrying another attorney, and thrown herself into the arms of a musketeer, the brother of one of her convent friends. This man had deflowered her, kept her for six months, and then, growing tired of her, had betrayed her into sleeping with his friends. One of the latter told her what was happening, and she left her lover the same day, carrying her belongings with her. She took refuge in the *Nouvelle-Halle,* where she hired a back room on the fourth floor, and chose a man every evening to earn enough for the morrow's food. Thus I had come to know her. She had moved to the Rue Saintonge because she had noticed someone watching her one evening; now she confined herself to a turn on the Boulevard, during which she kept a careful look-out for the right type of man, so as not to solicit unprofitably. Thus she lived. She had been enchanted by *Le Pied de Fanchette,* and was quite satisfied now that she had "had" the author; she could imagine no greater happiness, etc. etc.

I never saw Victoire again after this interview, which lasted until eight o'clock in the evening of the 14th of September, 1769 (I wrote a 14 above the 8 inscribed in the preceding week); I felt she was a danger both to my heart and morals. This must have angered her, for in 1770, when I was recovering from the illness of which I shall be speaking later, she refused to grant me a moment's conversation. I have often seen her since at the *Palais,* whither she went to dispute her mother's will which disinherited her; but I never spoke to her, as she seemed afraid that I would. But it was not the pleasure given to me by this girl, on the 14th of September, which made the Rue Saintonge so dear to me that I can never visit it without emotion: it is the anniversaries of that day. Victoire repulsed me in 1770; but some time afterwards, happening to pass down the Rue Saintonge on the 14th of September, I gazed up at the window of the room where I had been so happy. Moved by the tender memory, I turned about, and then saw written on the terrace wall: *14 7bris 1769 felicitatem Vict. ineff.* My heart leapt! Never have I experienced a like emotion. . . . It was this emotion and this memory, after a mortal illness in the interval, that gave the Rue Saintonge its charm; and I chanted the words aloud which I have never failed to chant for the last twenty-seven years whenever I went down that road: *Charmed spot, how amiable she has made you! You are still dear to me, even though she no longer loves me . . . !* I repeat these words, with varying modulations; I weep and I pass. . . . Nor is this all: there is a fountain at the corner of the *Rue Vielle-du-Temple* which had been my guide in finding the Rue Saintonge; this also has grown dear to me, and I salute it, saying: "O Fountain! Fountain of the Fairies! You recall Victoire, Victoire and happiness!" Thus I have sung for twenty-seven years and always with the same emotion of delicious tenderness which the first memory evoked in 1770. What is the source of such emotions? Can it be that in love, it is not the person that we love, but the momentary enchantment she lends to our existence, so that love for a mistress is no more than a charmed, romantic love of self? . . . I think this is so, and shall give fresh proof of it in 1780-81, when I come to my attachment for Sara Debée. . . . Thus in Jeannette and Mme Parangon, in Madelon Baron, Zéphire, Nicard, Louise and Thérèse, I but loved myself! Ah, each of us is a Narcissus!

During my acquaintance with Victoire I was reading the proofs of the *Dictionnaire d'Architecture* by *Sieur Roland de Virelois*, which the bookseller Ganneaux was having printed. Never was work so lamentably prepared:

the author had written so badly that the items were unintelligible; it was a laborious task even to make sense of it. And to this was added the task of compiling the vocabulary. I had already begun on the latter when the shameless compiler, who had not appeared once during the printing of the book, was shown some of the finished sheets and, discovering that his work had been turned into French, had the audacity to come to the printer's in order to compile the vocabulary. He had to disparage my work in some way, and set about doing so like a fool, doubling the vocabulary by inserting, not only the words from foreign languages employed in his Dictionary, but the adjectives for every noun and the participles of all the verbs, as though he were composing a grammar. That was the limit of his invention, but it was enough to gull the booksellers.

It was at the beginning of 1770 that Agnès Lebègue took over the apartment and furniture of the painter in the Rue de la Vieille-Bouclerie. She paid for them out of the effects of the bookseller Gauguery, which fortunately covered them. My beloved fifth floor in the Collège de Presle, where I began *Le Paysan* and where I was so happy, was only a garret. Agnès had a second floor apartment. I was financed at the time by Edme Rapenot, who paid me six francs a week on account of my *Mimographe* of which he had taken four hundred copies; and by Gauguery, who had taken copies of *Le Pied de Fanchette* and *La Fille Naturelle* to the value of fourteen hundred livres, of which he paid me two hundred at the rate of six francs a week. This made twelve francs. . . . I remained on my fifth floor which cost me nothing, as the rent was deducted from what Edme owed me; moreover, I liked it because I enjoyed absolute peace there.

Thus I was happily situated; I had six francs a week, as I thought, assured to me and my rent, while Agnès Lebègue had Gauguery's six francs a week, together with bills for twelve hundred livres on the same bookseller, which she regarded as so much bar gold. For my part, I had bills for fourteen hundred and twenty-five livres on Edme Rapenot; I had received nearly five hundred livres at different times from Ganneaux; I was reading proofs for Humblot at a livre and a quarter the sheet; I was beginning my *École des Pères,* which, according to my contract and allowing for the sums I had paid for paper and for over-running in 8vo, ought to bring me in nearly thirty-two livres the sheet. Clearly a happy prospect for a man who asked no more than to work and eat. Then I met with a disaster the effects of which will only end with my life. . . . Agnès Lebègue had just paid a visit to my dear mother and had brought back her second daughter. Once more I was in the bosom of my family, which I could at last support, and then . . . My pen refuses to perform its office. . . . I will relate the horrible facts, but I will be silent as to causes and precede my tale with a little collateral history.

As we know, I was acquainted with Progrès, who was living in the Rue de la Harpe opposite *Harcourt.* Lodging in the same furnished house were a certain rogue of Toulouse called Mazin, together with his wife and daughter; a medical student, and a profligate abbé called Higonnet, whose pleasures were provided for by the Mazin family. Mme Progrès adored the medical student, but she had to conceal this from her husband, because he was jealous in spite of the fact that he had a mistress of his own, a very pretty and rather wanton upholstress called Rose. Mlle Mazin, who had the most beautiful fair hair in the world, passed for Higonnet's mistress; and so she had been, but now she was merely his pander on the wages of a mistress. This Mazin girl was acquainted with Mlle Mesnard, who has since become an actress at the *Italiens*, and tried to get her for the abbé, but presumably he did not find favour with her, as Mlle Mesnard withdrew. Then Higonnet in desperation cast his eyes upon Mme Progrès, who was distractedly in love with the medical student; and the Mazins, mother and daughter, took advantage of an indiscretion on the part of Progrès, which led to his spending a fortnight in the Châtelet, to try to bring the fragile Nimot to reason. She had the abbé, and he infected her. . . . Then it was necessary to infect her husband, in order to convince him that it was he who had infected his wife. To this end they resorted to a trick. His Dulcinea of the moment, as we know, was Rose the upholstress, and as she had a spite against him, the two Mazins were able to suborn her. She promised Progrès a night, but under conditions which made it easy to effect an exchange. The wife replaced the mistress; M. Progrès went to work thinking he was possessing Rose G. . . ., and was horribly infected. His wife was careful to sleep with him as usual from the following night onwards, and thus he was cruelly deceived. . . . It was in this abominable stew that I, all unsuspectingly, was to be involved.

But first I must mention that there was a very pretty girl who lived in a fourth floor room opposite to my fifth floor, Mlle *Agathe Georges*. She was the cousin of two demoiselles *Georges* with whom I had at one time been friendly, but my wife had made mischief between us. (Agnès had a curious mania for introducing me to all her friends and acquaintances after she had praised them to me, and then if I showed too much sympathy with her opinion, falling out with them so as to involve me in the quarrel. She did this so cleverly that they were always left with the impression that it was my wish that she should see no more of them. Her methods were humiliating, and made dangerous enemies for me of women I held in esteem. Thus she made irreparable mischief between me and my amorous clock-maker of the Place Dauphine, a kind and amiable woman whom I had cultivated because she was very useful to my wife. Agnès told her that I had complained of her advances and made fun of them, with the result that when I met her one day, in company with several other ladies, at a neighbour's house, she called me a puppy. My amazement should have undeceived her, and indeed one of her neighbours, the elder Mlle *Délorme*, told her that she had been misled; but she was too angry to listen. She insulted me and I never saw her again. Some years later she found out the truth from Mme Saniez, but I was then too busy to make any effort to revive an old love.)

I found Mlle Agathe charming and did not conceal the fact; but her two cousins, more especially the younger, put her against me. I made various attempts to explain the situation, with the result that I was not only unsuccessful, but the younger Georges told my wife that I had only stayed on the fifth floor because of my passion for Mlle Agathe. Agnès Lebègue was annoyed, and resolved to punish me. But how?

While she was wondering how to set about it, the priest, Higonnet, disgusted with Angélique Nimot because she did not love him, took a fancy for Agnès Lebègue. He told the Mazins, and old Mazin together with his perdurable wife and their little decoy bird immediately got to work on Agnès Lebègue. Parties, trifling gifts, delicate attentions, all the right things were done. I was surprised, not knowing what was at the bottom of it all. Finally they arranged that after an excellent meal, the abbé should be left alone with Agnès Lebègue. She vowed her wine was doctored; but, anyway, she was shut up alone with the big abbé, the Mazins held the door, and she was taken by force, or by surprise . . . at least that was what I was told. . . . They were obliged to put her to bed for the rest of the day, and by evening she seemed very ill. But as I was living on my fifth floor, I did not see her. . . . Now Agnès Lebègue had her fancy man, as had Angélique Nimot, in the shape of a puppy called Coulet, who was Gauguery's assistant in the shop; and this Coulet was made happy for the first time after the incident with the Abbé Higonnet. He was . . . infected . . . This mishap was a thunderbolt. However, she pulled herself together, and two ideas occurred simultaneously to her: to punish me for being attracted by Agathe, and to punish the girl also if she had fallen. Best of all, she would be able to show me ill to Coulet, and convince him that I, and not the foul gutter whence it really flowed, was the source of infection. So she made an elaborate toilet, paying special attention to the shoes, and came to see me, certain that I would succumb if I was not having Agathe. She was not mistaken. . . . Her fiendish malice was crowned with success. Everything served her purpose. In the course of the following week I managed to put myself right with the elder Georges; she came to my room and even let herself be seen there by her cousin Agathe. I tried . . . a sharp pain warned me of my misfortune, and I let pretty Georges escape. . . . In my note-book I find the following: "*Enarram crudelem meam sortem, hodie 17 Aprilis 1770! . . . O malum! . . . Sic mihi evenit: quidam abbas Higonnet, seductam uxorem a Mazinæis, matre filiaque, spurcavit et coinquinavit; quæ labem dedit tirunculo Gauguery, nomine Coulet; et, consulata Angelica Nimot, Mazinæisque, illi indicaverunt quod perpetrarat Angelica Nimot. Convenit me in Collegio Præliaco, ubi me multis nequitiis excitatum, ad coitum adduxit; unde mihi lethalis labes. . . . Nam ad inducias redactus, vix hoc malum evasi, et mihi superest fluxus, qui fractas vires paulatim consumit.*"

I was still not quite certain of my condition after Mlle Georges' departure, but next day, as I was standing at my window watching Agathe, I felt unmistakeable symptoms of it. Yet I could not believe it, as I had not exposed myself in any way. I was in despair! It was the thing I feared most of all, for I was not then acquainted with my friend Dr. *de Préval.* I tried various ineffective remedies, but as my condition only grew worse, I went in search of Progrès. I found him in worse case than myself, as he had moved to Mlle Gosset's house in the Rue *Béthisy* with the disease upon him, and the fatigue incurred had made him so ill that he had had to take to his bed. I confessed what had happened to me, holding my tongue as to the cause; but he told me his story without reserve: his wife had not been able to hold her tongue, and he knew everything. We condoled with each other, and I left him. Next day discomfort rather than any further development prevented me from walking. That same M. Lancelot, who had been Governor of La Force at Bicêtre in the old days, took me in hand and treated me with some ointment; but as my skin will not tolerate grease in any form, erysipelas supervened, and was terrible on the afflicted part. In a few days I was at death's door. Agnès Lebègue came to nurse me, but only out of an infernal malice; when she was out, my daughter Agnès sat with me. The latter was now nine years old, as she was born in 1761; and here is a letter, which she amused herself by writing at my table, to a certain Mlle Pauline (a most amiable girl, the daughter of the elder Valeyre, who was at a Convent): *"Mademoiselle, I am writing to enquire as to your health. As good news I will tell you that I have been very ill since you saw me last, but luckily I am much better now. I have a lot of interesting adventures to tell you; but as the portress is very inquisitive, I will wait till I can tell you about them myself. Your servant and friend, Mademoiselle, to the bottom of my heart, Agnès Restif. Monsieur Valeyre is better in health, and my Papa is worse."* This letter is all the more extraordinary because we had never taught our children either to read or write: they learned by themselves. All we had done was to answer their questions about the names and sound value of the letters.

About the time that my dear daughter was writing this letter, I was threatened with gangrene, and *Chaupisse*, whom Mme Valeyre had recommended as a very clever surgeon, warned me that all might be over in twenty-four hours. I wrote a farewell letter to my pretty neighbour Agathe, and sent it to her by Agnès. . . . It was at this point that I had one of those amazing and unexpected adventures which stagger the mind. Mlle Agathe was surprised to have a letter from me and, as we had known each other but slightly, she read it aloud, the signature included, to a neighbour of her acquaintance, a young half-breed. On hearing my name this young half-breed exclaimed: "What, is that from Monsieur Nicolas?" "Yes," answered Agathe, "the man you have talked about so much!" Turning to my daughter, the half-breed then asked: "Is not your father Madame Beaucousin's brother, Mademoiselle?" "Yes, Madame." "It is he! It is he! . . . I must go and see him. . . . I have the note here. . . . Please, Mademoiselle, would you tell your father that you found a Mademoiselle Esthérette with Mademoiselle Agathe, and that she asked his permission to visit him. . . . I will knock at the door, and you can let me in if he consents." Agnès returned to me and repeated the message. The name Esthérette recalled my negress of the Faubourg Antoine and the year 1747; however, I did not jump to the truth at once. I instructed my daughter to admit Esthérette when she knocked, and tell her that I was willing to receive a visit in spite of my condition. A moment later the bell rang and Agnès ran to the door, saying: "Come in, Madame! Papa would like to see you!" and she led in a tall, pretty half-breed, with rosy cheeks, beautiful eyes, a cast of face which was Grecian rather than African, fine teeth, and a smile . . . by which I almost recognised her. I was lying on my pallet in a sad state, yet the pretty girl kissed me as she asked whether I remembered Esther of the Faubourg Antoine. "Why, yes, certainly, Mademoiselle." "She was my mother. She died two years ago, but here is a letter in her own handwriting." And she unfolded a paper and gave it to me.

> *"My dear child Esthérette, you are the daughter of a man who is neither slave nor servant: Monsieur* Nicolas-Edme-Anne-Augustin R***, *brother of Madame Beaucousin, pastrycook of the Faubourg Antoine, and of Madame Bizet, retail jeweller of the Quai de Gèvres. I am most anxious for you to meet your father and that he should know you, especially should you contemplate marriage, as he could then help you with advice; for I hear that he is a clever man. Show him this paper and ask him if he remembers Esther and the year 1747, and what happened between us on two occasions. You are the fruit of it. For I protest with my dying breath, and in the presence of God before whom I must soon appear owing to the brutality of my husband, Monsieur le Prince de Montbarrey's negro, that no other white man has ever touched me. I wanted to remain faithful to him, and, as for black men, I have never favoured any save my husband. May you be happier than I have been, dear Esthérette (for my murderer never forgave me), and be sure to be a comfort to your father. Your loving mother,*
>
> *Esther Palombo."*

My eyes rested on Esthérette and I thought her charming. "If all that your mother tells me is correct, you are indeed my daughter; for the essential incident certainly occurred!" At these words Esthérette threw herself into my arms, calling me her Papa, her dear Papa! "This is the first time in my life that I have ever used that word," she said, "and it is very sweet to me!" "You may not be able to use it for long!" I answered. Esthérette wept. She wanted to nurse me, but I refused on account of Agnès Lebègue, and begged her not to reveal her identity to her sister. The word sister went to her heart; and she fondled little Agnès, saying from moment to moment:

"She is a sweet child, and she is going to be pretty!" While she was caressing her sister, I wrote at the foot of her mother's letter: *"I the undersigned acknowledge the truth of the statements made in this letter, shown me by my dear daughter, Esthérette R***. May the 1st, during my illness,* Nicolas-Edme-Anne-Augustin-Restif, *called* MONSIEUR NICOLAS. *Signed by me in Paris, in the year 1770."* I showed what I had written to Esthérette, and she was overjoyed. Then we talked for a little, but with the uneasy feeling that Agnès Lebègue might return at any moment. At last Esthérette took her departure.

I became very much worse after she had gone, but I accepted my lot without repining; my only regret that I had not finished my *École des Pères* and my *Paysan perverti.* During the night and the day following I grew steadily worse. I had been able to read a little on the day before, but on the 2nd of May I was incapable of this; I lay stretched upon my pallet awaiting death. . . . It did not come. Esthérette called three times, and she comforted me. Towards six o'clock in the evening the erysipelas abated, and I slept a little during the night. Next day saw me on the mend, but it was a long time before I could walk, owing to the extreme sensitiveness of the afflicted part. I saw Esthérette again on the 9th of May, and it was in her arms that I felt the pleasure of returning life for the first time, though continuance of my affliction was to poison it for many days to come. Against my will I was carried to the Rue de la Vieille-Bouclerie, and here I stayed for twenty days. I was tormented by horrible mucous colics, which made the lower parts of the belly and the groins so painful that I could not walk. During this time I read *Clarissa** and *Pamela* for the first time; they were lent to me by Pauline's mother, Mme Valeyre.

**Clarissa Harlowe,* and the other novels of Richardson here referred to, were at this time well known and popular in France. Restif himself, even by so prominent a moralist as Lavater, was pronounced to be "the French Richardson." [Ed.]

I had chanced upon a volume of Pamela on my arrival at the Collège de Presle a year before, and I confess that the book had strengthened my intention of writing *Le Paysan perverti*, as the style seemed just what was wanted for certain of the letters. I had longed intensely ever since to finish it, and devoured all the eight volumes (for I was lent the sequel also), and my sufferings were forgotten in the interest of it. I found *Clarissa* wearisome; I admired the book but I did not like it. *Sir Charles Grandison* was emotionally more satisfactory, especially the first volume; but I was too much interested in *Clementina*, and I think it was a mistake on the part of the English author to give *Miss Byron* such a rival.

I was unconscious of my malady while reading, and it gradually abated, so that I found myself in a condition to return to my garret in the Collège de Presle. I was longing to do so, as I wanted to see my dear Esthérette again, and no sooner was I back in my room than I went and stood at the window. Sweet Agathe greeted my appearance with a gracious gesture, and within half an hour my second daughter was with me (Zéphire being the eldest, and Éléonore the third). That day I told her all my adventures, and especially what I knew about her sisters. I was almost happy again with this child. Two months later she married a butler, whom I inspected and found suitable. Now they have some nice children who are no more than very dark; my daughter's husband is fair. How is it that my natural children have been more fortunate (with the exception of Zéphire) than my legitimate ones? Is it because they have less guilty mothers?

On my return to the Collège de Presle, and still subject to violent attacks of pain, I resumed *Le Paysan perverti*, but could do little work on it. I was almost well by September. I began printing my *École des Pères*, and this kept me busy into December. I had meant to include in it the work I did at Sacy during 1767; but I did not consider it good enough, and printed it at my own expense under the title of *L'École de la Jeunesse*, in four parts, during an interruption of my other work, due to Costard, which lasted until Easter 1771.

I handed the whole edition over to that Le Jay made famous by Beaumarchais, and he kept it for two years without selling more than a couple of hundred copies. Then I took it away from him, and the book sold well; it is one of those which have been out of print for some time. On the 8th of June in this same year I received the sad tidings that my dear mother had fallen into a decline and was dying; and in spite of work and my continued poverty, I left Paris on the 10th. It was on this journey that, without recognising her, I saw the fruit of my adventure of the 6th of May, 1756. I had just got on board and entered the general saloon, when I noticed two women of a certain age behind me; one was thirty-five and the other about fifty. The former was lively and agreeable enough, but the latter was a squeamish old fool who started at the slightest jerk as though the boat was going to split in half. They had a girl of about fourteen with them, as fair as Psyche, whom they addressed as *Reine*, or sometimes by the name of *Septimanette*. I fell madly in love with this child, and could not leave her side. I took her on deck, told her the names of the places that we passed, and said sweet nothings to her. . . . My passion rose to a frenzy, and I fell. . . . The reeds on either hand bent to the boat's wash, and I said to her: "They are bowing to you! They know that you are a Queen." The young girl laughed and looked even prettier than before. . . . Ah, what remorse! . . . It is wrong to yield to a too intense emotion. . . . At night I gave her my mattress and pillow, and covered her with my cloak; with the help of a plank which I had acquired, I made her a regular bed. . . . Everything about her was in exquisite taste. . . . Next day I again took possession of her, but noticing that we were observed, I misled the watchers by my exemplary behaviour . . . and then I abused the trust I had inspired. . . .

My happiness came to an end with mid-day. When we reached Montereau, a carriage was waiting for the ladies on the quay, and they went ashore in a skiff. I handed them down, paying special attention to the old lady, who was obliged to lie flat in the bottom of it with her eyes shut. Reine Septimanette bade me the tenderest farewell and left me an address for letters, which I unfortunately dropped into the water after her departure. As I watched her vanishing in the distance I thought of Edmée-Colette and Hypsipyle, but Reine was sufficient in herself to excite my tenderness, and I wept. I was travelling on the Sens boat, and I made certain marks upon it, registering a vow to take the same boat on my return, so as to weep again. I went on foot from Pons to Sens, venting my emotion in cries and gathering little flowers, which I dried between the leaves of a book in memory of Reine Septimanette, just as I had done on the previous occasion for Edmée-Colette. I was astonished at my emotion, which I attributed to love; but see the end of my *Calendar*.

This emotion was succeeded, on my arrival home, by another and most painful one. Barbe Ferlet lay dying . . . disfigured. . . . I could not endure this terrible spectacle, and directly she had lost consciousness I returned to Paris, without waiting to wind up the business. I gave the Abbé Thomas power of attorney. From this bitter day, this 5th of July, I was an orphan; for I no longer had a kind mother whom I could run to with my troubles. . .

Only Reine Septimanette could tranquillise my grief; and I hoped to find her again. I searched for her; I met every boat until winter began, but I never saw her again. . . . Doubtless this was a consequence of my behaviour with her.

This was a year of adventures.

On my return I did another three months' work on *L'École des Pères*, at the end of which time a new interruption forced me to turn to something else. I finished my *Lettres d'une Fille à son Père*, which would have been imaginatively the best of my works, if I had reprinted it or if I had not been in such a wretched state while writing it; for it was in this year that I lost my six livres a week from Gauguery and my twelve hundred livres in bills, on which I never got a penny, thanks to Leclerc, any more than I did on the bills for two thousand and thirty-two livres given to me by Michel in payment for my *Mimographe*. Thus I was left with nothing but Edme Rapenot's six livres (for I could not discount my bills for the *Pornographe* without annoying him), and it was to him that I sold my *Lettres d'une Fille*, which he had printed by *Pillot*. Pillot gave up the work in the middle for want of funds; however, as Edme still had an excellent reputation, it was possible to resume the printing.

I had various adventures about this time, a little earlier perhaps, or a little later. I especially remember two pretty cousins, one on my father's side, *Josephette Restif*, the other on my mother's, *Ursule Charruat*, whom I met on my visit in 1764. I did not mention them at the time, yet they made such a deep impression on me that they will be found in my *Calendar* under the 12th and 13th of October. . . . But I also had passing affairs with my neighbour, Mlle *Julie Laurens*, with *Rosette Vaillant* the model, with *Javote* the trimming-maker and with *Cécile Duval*, *Pauline Eryelav*,* the sisters *Emroled*,† daughters of a watch-maker, and finally with Mlle Prévôt. For all these, and for my interlude with Agathine, see my *Calendar*.

But I will go into more detail on the subject of Céleste and Julie

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*Valeyre. [Ed.]

†Mlles Delorme. [Ed.]

Bertrand. They had a good-for-nothing brother, and worked as lace-makers on their own account. One of their girls was *Adélaïde Lhuillier* (of whom I shall have more to say later) and it was she who introduced me to them as well as to Gronavet. . . . We got on well together the first time we met. Céleste still bore traces of a rare beauty, which was in its prime in her younger sister Julie. Céleste was a masterpiece of good sense; a perfect portrait of her will be found in the 138th *Contemporaine*, *La Dentellière*. There her opinions are quoted in her own words, and it was in consequence of these that, not knowing that I was to find a husband for her sister and thinking she was condemned to celibacy, she gave her to *Sed'ugitra*, a young gentleman of Dijon, and to myself. She wanted her sister to enjoy the pleasures of love with honest and good-hearted men, but not in such a way as to degrade herself (for which reason she would have nothing to do with Gronavet). "I want her to taste all natural pleasures, and not to languish for the lack of them," she said. Certainly Julie could not have endured ugly Gronavet. I broke off my friendship with these dear girls for two reasons: in the first place I met young Ruffier, an old comrade of mine at the Louvre, and suggested that he should marry Julie. This unfortunate young fellow also had a bankrupt brother, and was on the point of returning to England where he was working as a printer. He wanted to marry a Frenchwoman, preferably a Parisian, who did not know of his misfortune. When I described Julie Bertrand, mentioning the similarity in their positions, he threw his arms round my neck, crying: "That is the wife for me. I would rather have her than anyone else. . . ." Curiously enough Céleste used exactly the same words before she knew what Ruffier had said. . . . So they were married: handsome and dark the two of them, they must have looked strange in England! The reason which led me to neglect Céleste after Julie's marriage was that I had met *Louise* and *Thérèse*, and my friendship with them closed my heart to all other impressions for a long time. . . . Still I had a little interlude with a girl who (though I did not know it at the time) worked for Céleste: that little *Blanche* whom I met at eleven o'clock at night in the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec, and whom I introduced with the Dlles Bertrand into my Drama, *Les Fautes sont Personelles*, for which the two sisters furnished the plot. Blanche was dressed in white, and she was so tiny that I took her for a child. A drunken brother had thrown her out of doors. I escorted her to some relatives of hers in the *Rue des Moineaux*: no answer; then to her mistress's in the same road: too late. We wandered about all night, looked at askance by the Watch and all night prowlers. We sat down to rest on a bench in the Place Vendôme, and there, tempted by her pretty ways, I caressed her. . . . She yielded to my encircling arms. I told her to withstand me, and that I was acting against my principles and my will. . . . "I am too excited!" she answered; so it had to be. I remarked that she was not a virgin. "Faith, no! When my brother is drunk he beats me or rapes me. . . . But I dare not say anything." I felt a little less remorseful. . . . In the morning I gave her breakfast in a coffee-house, and then took her as far as her mistress's door, but would not go in with her. . . . Mlles Bertrand and Blanche occur in my *Calendar* under the 1st of October. I never saw the latter again, but she married Ruffier's third brother. . . . About the same time I had *Rose Gauthier*, then *Jeanne Maricot* and her friend *Louise Davré*, a pretty waterside laundress, and her younger sister *Babe Maricôt*, who afterwards married a bookbinder.

Thus I was always mixing one thing with another, work, worry, poverty, pleasure, and sometimes love. I was never without work: when

Costard stopped the printing of *L'École des Pères* for want of paper, I fell back on *Le Paysan* or *Les Lettres d'une Fille à son Père*, or I began on new stories. Through my *Lettres* I made mortal enemies in the following manner.

I had composed a play for Audinot, based on the fable *La Cigale et la Fourmi.* Afterwards I wrote another called *Le Jugement de Paris.* As one is always drawn to talk of what one knows, I mentioned these in my *Lettres d'une Fille à son Père*, attributing them to one of my characters. Then I conceived the idea of writing a fifth part, entitled *Pièces Relatives aux Lettres d'une Fille à son Père*, and added thereto a dissertation on *L'Ambigu-Comique*, where my two plays were to be acted. In this dissertation I did equal justice to the ability displayed by the Director and the unsuitability of the plays shown by him to the lips of young children. The Director was very pleased with my work, which he read in proof and for which he had made certain suggestions. But the authors concerned were furious, and Progrès, now recovered from his dangerous illness which had lasted for nearly a year, incited them against me. Jealousy prompted this action on his part; for he had heard a rumour about my two plays, and was afraid that I was working for Audinot. He need not have worried; I had not the gifts required for the Boulevard, and my two plays would never have been performed had not a certain Mme *de Montesson* paid the costs of their production in a small theatre, the *Popincourt*, where Audinot's children were playing to an audience selected by herself. The production of *La Cigale* presented some difficulties in the matter of costume, and in the acting, which needed to be more finished; as to the *Jugement*, it is obvious that no public representation of this play could have been given without first suppressing all the most pungent passages. So I did not press for their production; but

I had them printed as they were mentioned in my book, and because I was not displeased to put my readers in the way of appreciating my gifts. As Audinot let me know of Progrès's perfidy and his mean insinuations, our friendship ceased; but this was the least of the unpleasantnesses which my fifth part caused me. To bring it up to the right length, I added an essay written two years previously, which I found among my papers, concerning the relations which should obtain between authors and booksellers. Fenouillot de Falbaire's *Avis aux Gens de Lettres* had just been published; and Luneau de Boisgermain was bringing his lawsuit against the booksellers; but I saw nothing in the book (and with reason) but one protracted sophism, and, in Luneau's case, ruin for literature, authors and booksellers. The latter was a charlatan playing for his own hand and with sufficient cleverness to win the support of the very people he was harming, the authors. Fenouillot worked up by Luneau, and Luneau, cool-headed Luneau, inflamed by Fenouillot, were a couple of ill-advised persons who turned the heads of all the authors.* In my *Contr'avis aux Gens de Lettres* I attacked their policy, and as I was not sure of my information in what concerned the booksellers, I consulted wise Humblot, who gave me the facts I wanted. I was unsuspicious, disinterested, and of no party; I had no idea that Desmarolles, chief clerk to the Lieutenant of Police for the book trade, and Dhemmery, the police officer, were of Luneau's party; I did not know, and I still do not know, what was at the root of the understanding between them. I published my *Réflections sur l'Ambigu-Comique* and *Contr'avis* separately in advance, and presented copies to the two men I was thwarting.

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*Authors would have done well to distrust Luneau when they saw his cause was supported by Dhemmery, Desmarolles and Saint-Léger; in a word, by every spy in the book trade in the pay of the police!

The first sent for me on receipt of it to ask whether I had permission to publish the little trifle. "Monsieur, I would not have offered it to you without having first obtained my permission," I answered. I did not yet understand. But when the book was put on sale a month later, it was stopped and scrutinised, and returned to me, not on account of the *Contr'avis aux Gens de Lettres*, but to have certain passages deleted from a little story. Such was the trivial origin of a thousand grievous difficulties, which were always cropping up and which I shall describe as I go on. If I ever escaped persecution, it was because my obscurity saved me.

After I had extricated myself from this unlucky dilemma I printed *La Femme dans les Trois États de Fille, d'Épouse et de Mère.* I had written the second part, entitled *L'Épouse* or *La Femme*, in the winter of 1771-1772; during a recrudescence of my illness of the previous April, brought on in the same way, but with less energy, so that the attack was slighter. I was treated by Nicole, but his dangerous methods were ineffective, and my symptoms disappeared of their own accord. . . . My idea had been to write a sequel to my *Lucille*, but Valade put it to me that sequels never sold, so in the summer of 1772 I wrote a first and third part to the book, and chose my title according to the different ages of my heroine, who was really Lucille, though she was called Félicité. In all my works there is nothing gayer than the part I wrote when I was ill; it distracted my mind. Also it gave Citoyen *de la Chabeaussière* his plot for *Les Maris Corrigés*, a feeble play, devoid of interest save for the situations which he stole from me, and for certain original ideas which were also mine. My imitator never once thought for himself while versifying; he followed me slavishly step by step, even when it would have been better not to do so, so that I have suffered while watching the production through seeing my own mistakes repeated in two or three places. Yet the Play had some success, and is the best the author has done. . . . This book escaped vile Desmarolles because Valade wrote the advertisement himself, and my Théodore took complimentary copies to the Police.

In August of 1771 I had a strange encounter! . . . I was returning to my fifth floor in the Collège de Presle after my evening stroll, when I was accosted by a young girl with a little parcel under her arm. I spoke to her.* She seemed embarrassed. I offered her my escort, at the same time asking where she was going. "To the Vieille-Rue-du-Temple, to spend the night with a friend," she answered. I suggested that we should go together, and she accepted my arm. On the way she told me that her name was Adélaïde Lhuillier, and that she worked for two sisters called Bertrand, lace menders. Her brother, a sergeant in the Guards, was a bad man and had just beaten her in her mother's house, and so ill-treated her that she had run away. . . . I comforted her. We reached the Vieille-Rue-du-Temple, but little Adélaïde knew no one there; so I took her home to my garret, and we went to bed on my pallet. During the night Adélaïde gave me a burning kiss, but I stood firm and did not lose control of myself. The girl seemed to me an adventuress, and I was thoroughly frightened by my illness of the preceding year. I rose at daylight next morning, and left my companion sleeping while I went out in search of food. She was awake when I returned, and her freshness and beauty, which in the evening I had thought deceitful, astonished me. I was most polite to the child and kept her with me for a week, treating her all the time as a father, which she found tedious. During this time Gronavet came to see me, and he congratulated me on my companion, whom he took to be my mistress. I left them together while

*See the 9th *Contemporaine* and *Les Nuits de Paris.*

I fetched something for dinner, but I was quickly back, as I distrusted little Mamonet. On my return I found them copulating, not on my bed, but on some old pamphlets which belonged to my bookseller Edme. I scolded the cynical Gronavet severely, and also the too facile Adélaïde. She then told us that she had spent a week with a young man in the *Rue du Bac* between leaving home and meeting me, and that he had turned her out when he was tired of enjoying her. This confession lessened my pain, for Gronavet did not deserve to pluck the rose. We went out together, and Adélaïde and Gronavet lost me on purpose. I finished my business, and on my return found she had taken away her little bundle. She never came back to my room, where she had not dared even to go near the window, for fear of being seen by Agathe and her two cousins, the Mlles Georges. I was not sorry that she had left me, as I did not want my pretty Esthérette to meet her and think she was my mistress. Gronavet, though he had not a shirt to his back and was married, wanted to keep her. He found her a room in a fruiterer's house in the *Rue Beaurepair*, quite near to the *Rue du Renard*, and gave her some chemises belonging to his wife, who was not too well provided herself. . . . He only kept her for a fortnight, at the end of which Adélaïde, disgusted with vice by the filthy Gronavet, returned to the Mlles Bertrand, her mistresses, and begged them to ask me to speak for her. They wrote to me, we became friends, and I reconciled the girl with her brother and her mother. . . . I owe her a debt for having given me the idea of introducing Ruffier, whom I have already mentioned, to the demoiselles Bertrand.

It was during the month of July 1772, when I was beginning to print the *Femme dans les Trois États* and was apparently at last delivered from persecution and from my horrible disease, that I made the acquaintance of Louise Élizabeth Alan. I was now thirty-eight years old, but I looked no more than thirty-five. I was taking a stroll one evening in the neighbourhood of Saint-Eustache when I saw a very pretty woman who was walking extremely quickly. At the same moment four young men closed in upon her. She screamed, and I flew to her help. I was told to go away, as she was a prostitute. "If she were a woman of the streets," I answered, "she would not resist you." On these words, the young person tore herself away from her molesters, seized my arm and begged me to take her home; which I did, despite the four young men whom I threatened with the Watch. When we reached the Sentinel in the Nouvelle-Halle Louise felt safe, and paused in her flight to speak to me. She was bathed in perspiration, and her face was nearer purple than red. She told me briefly that she had never been assaulted in her life, and used to laugh at those who complained of such happenings. She had always refused an escort home, but now she had learned at her own expense that there was some risk in doing so. "They addressed a civil word to me, and I smiled. Then one of them tried to take my hand, and I walked on quickly; but I heard them say to each other: '*She's one all right!*' I began to hurry, as you saw, but they surrounded me." I escorted Mlle Alan to her door; to that same No. 14 where Victoire had lived three years previously,* a fact I commented upon. I left her directly she had opened the street door. This was about the 9th or 10th of July.

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*Later I had another acquaintance in the same house, blonde *Luison*, a pretty girl of the *Faubourg Saint-Marceau*. She was seduced by a brewer's son, who was vile and contemptible enough to lure her into a house of ill-fame (La Guérin's), while pretending that he was taking her to a boarding-house. Louison made her escape directly she found out in what manner of house she was, and installed herself as a laundress on the ground floor of No. 14, where I found her. I introduced her to a journeyman printer who married her.

A week later I met Louise for the second time near to her door, and saluted her. Her first instinct was to run away, but a glance recalled me to her mind, and she stopped. "I ought not to be afraid of you," she said, "as it was you who rescued me. My brother has arrived, so please come upstairs as I should like him to meet you." She ran up in front of me and rang the bell. "He has gone out," she said, "but I have a key. Still, as he does not know you yet, let us go into my neighbour's apartment." She pushed open a door which was ajar, and I found myself in the presence of an excellent couple: a fresh-looking woman of about forty, and a big man of somewhat more than forty-five, whose opinion of his own importance was in proportion to his girth. They greeted Louise with the familiarity of friendship, and myself with some little surprise. "This is that honest gentleman, neighbour, who rescued me from those blackguards the other day," said the girl. "Ah, Monsieur," said the big man, "that was generously done! For after all there was a danger. . . ." "None whatever, Monsieur, I assure you," I answered. "All wrongdoers are cowards, and an honest man can frighten away ten ill-intentioned ones." "Well said! A good maxim; make a note of it, wife!" "I was listening with pleasure, husband!" Then Louise said: "I want my brother to meet Monsieur. I thought he had come in." "He did come in," said her neighbour, "but he has just gone out again." "Monsieur looks to me like a surgeon?" remarked the man. "I have not that honour." "Yet Monsieur does not look like a workman?" "I am a printer of books." "Ah, Monsieur, you must be very learned! Do you know a book called *Les Sept Trompettes*?" "Yes, Monsieur." "An excellent book!" "People do not think so much of it as they used to." "That is because the age is corrupt! But surely Père Caussin's *La Cour Sainte* is still read? Now that is a book!" "Hardly more than *Les*

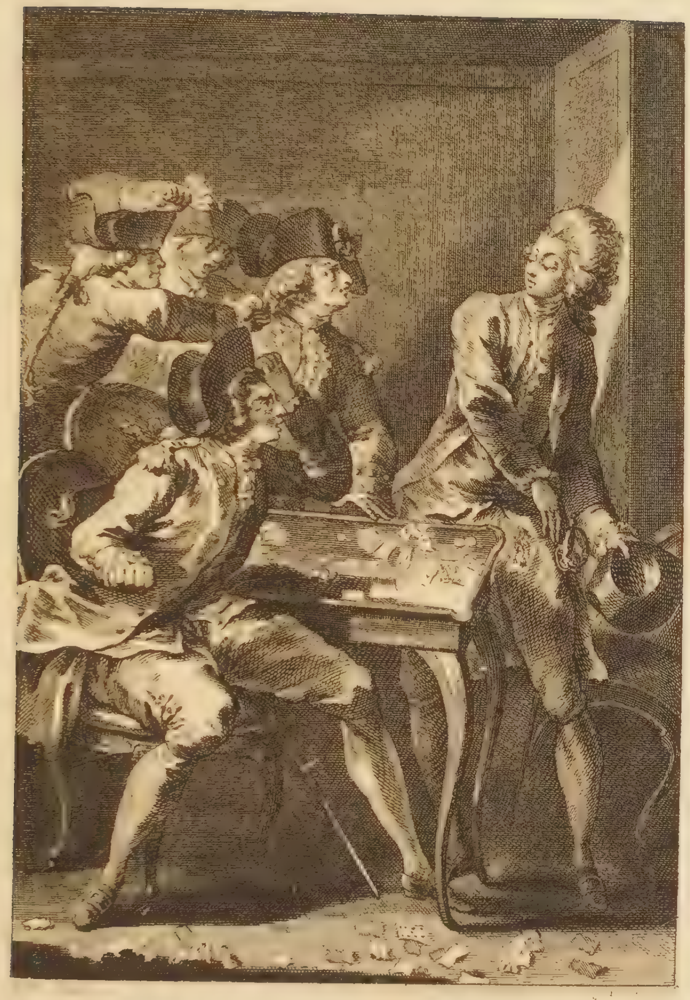
Sept Trompettes. It is regarded as an uncritical collection of fairy tales." "You are joking, Monsieur! It is the finest book I have ever read!" "That is possible, Monsieur." "Would you be so kind as to tell me what books are well thought of nowadays?" "Buffon's *Natural History*; Voltaire's Tragedies; Rousseau's *Émile* and *Héloïse*; some of Racine's Tragedies and a few of Corneille's; some of the novels of Prévost, Mme Riccoboni, and Lesage; Marmontel's *Contes Moraux*; some books by Mme de Beauharnais, Mercier, and Dorat; some new contributions to physical science. . . ." "I don't know one of them! The world has indeed greatly changed, without my realising it! . . ." "I know a book which gave me the greatest pleasure," said Louise. "I wept with all my heart while reading it; but it must be old, very old, for it is all torn. I will go and get it." She went out, but as she opened the door she saw her brother. "My dear," she said, "here is that *gentleman*!" Her brother started towards us, then halted in surprise when he caught sight of me. His face was not unknown to me, but I could not place it. He greeted me, and as my answer gave him no clue, he recovered himself; yet his voice struck a chord, but I surmised that if I had really heard it, it was just in passing, or that he was like someone that I used to know. After a few words with his neighbours, we went into M. Alan's apartment, and his name convinced me that I had never met him. He was very friendly to me, and assured me that I had made quite a conquest of his sister, adding a remark which astonished me from the lips of a stranger: "I am convinced from the way in which she is always talking about you since you met that you would be very happy together!" I blushed with pleasure, but I was very much surprised! However, I was careful not to mention that I was married. Such a confession at this particular moment would have seemed to me the worst of misfortunes! I was enchanted with

Louise, and wanted to know her at least well enough to store by tender memories for the future. For I had found at times such a voluptuous pleasure in weeping for Colette, Madelon, Zéphire, Mlle Rose Bourgeois, and Élise; and even for Adélaïde Nicard, Colette the laundress and her friend Manon, that it was a sort of luxury to me to win a new friend who would make herself regretted as I regretted these. This was the only reason for my reserve: if there had been one more culpable, I would confess it. Therefore I turned my answers in such a way as to convince Alan that, on the one hand, I was a bachelor and, on the other, that I was attracted by Louise, and his cordiality knew no bounds. Louise was sitting by my side and, taking her hand, I gazed at this sweet girl who, with her ingenuous air, was a veritable jewel of prettiness. My heart leapt; but in the same moment I remembered that happiness with her was not for me, and a sad emotion brought the tears starting to my eyes. Louise and her brother found another reason for my tears; they thought I wept for joy, and their friendliness redoubled. They asked me to stay for supper, and M. Alan vanished for a moment to go to the cookshop, so that I was left alone with Louise. She rose, apparently in some agitation and embarrassment, and began to lay the table. As she passed near to me I kissed her hand, and she responded with a remark which astonished me: "How I wish I had known you sooner!" "What use would that have been?" "A great deal!" Her brother returned and we sat down to table. Gaiety reigned, even in my heart.

From time to time, however, Louise seemed absent-minded. "I do not know your name yet," said Alan, 'thou-ing' me. "Bertrô," I answered without hesitation (for I felt I could not give my own name which was becoming known). "My dear Bertrô, what did you and Louise do while

I was away, and what did you say to her? Have you fixed your wedding day?" "I did not venture to speak of it," I answered, more and more amazed at the promptitude, not to say precipitation of this brother! "I assure you that she is enchanted with you," he answered. "I am only in for an hour a day, and I admit that the necessity of leaving an amorous and pretty sister so much alone causes me some anxiety." "I am a man of honour, friend; and if you confide her to me, the trust shall be sacred." "Yes, I will trust her to you; but there must be no haggling. She will get nothing when she marries, because I am not well off. As a surgeon I can make enough to keep us, but not enough to save." "I should not court her for the dowry, if . . . It would be just for herself." "Good! I answer for it that she is a good manager and sweet-tempered." "I can read every virtue in her lovely eyes." I kissed Louise's hand, and she sighed. Then we discussed the news of the day, and at eleven o'clock I rose to leave. I was surprised to see Louise slipping on her cloak in readiness to come out with me. "Where is Mademoiselle going?" "As you see, we have only one bed here," Alan replied. "My sister is young and pretty, and it would not be decent for her to sleep in the same apartment as her brother, although there are two rooms. She has two little rooms at the corner of the *Rues Babille* and *Deux Écus* and, as my first mark of confidence, I am going to let you escort her there. . . . I have made it a practice to take you home at night, dear sister, remove your key and leave it for you with our good neighbour on the morrow; but I shall never lock you in again. Love is a girl's best defence, and I leave you to him." Louise went downstairs without answering, and I followed her.

"Your brother is a very pleasant fellow," I said, "but rather strange!" "That is true. But he has always behaved well to me, and especially on



this occasion. I am pleased with his conduct to you." "Ah, fair Louise, do you approve of his plans?" "If I may speak frankly, your character attracts me to such an extent, and your conversation shows so much good sense that . . . I no longer feel the distaste which the thought of marriage has always inspired in me." I made no answer to this gracious speech, but it hurt me none the less; and I was laying up a store of sorrow and regret for the future.* When we reached the street door into Louise's house, I bowed and turned away, but she asked me to come upstairs. I found myself in an exquisitely clean little apartment with three windows, one on the Rue Babille, from which one could also see the farther end of the Rue des Deux Écus and that of the Rue d'Orléans, and two looking on the other end of the Rue des Deux Écus. She made me sit down by one of the windows, and we talked. She told me that she came from Versailles and was an orphan. When her brother left the army, in which he had served as a surgeon, he found her, utterly deserted, working for a dressmaker, and had taken her to live with him. "We have lived together for four years now, and I am nineteen. You inspire confidence, Monsieur, and be sure that I will trust you absolutely if you seem to wish it." "And I will be equally frank," I answered, "after we have met a few times more. Good-bye, fair Louise; my behaviour should prove that I deserve the confidence with which you have honoured me." Such was my first visit.

Louise had asked me to come and visit her again in her own apartment, and I returned next morning at nine o'clock. She was overjoyed to see me. After we had talked for a little, she gave me a book and went about her

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*I was indeed! For these emotions are not yet exhausted twenty-five years after! Every year from the 9th of July to the 9th of August I go to the *Nouvelle-Halle* to weep for Louise and for Thérèse, and gazing up at Lyra and Cygnus, I exclaim: "Star of Louise, star of Thérèse, I salute you!"

toilet. At mid-day, she asked me to give her my arm to the Rue Montmartre; here she was dining with some very kind people, who insisted on keeping me too. Louise was charming and, so it seemed to me, highly thought of. At four o'clock I was obliged to leave her to go about my business, and she asked me to return to her apartment at nine. I did not fail her, and found her waiting for me, her little table laid for two. "My brother is away for a few days," she said. "I could have stayed with our neighbours during his absence, but I prefer to be here with you. There is a desk if you want to write; I will not disturb you; I will find work to do here." I was charmed with her proposals –until reflection came to poison them. I was strongly tempted that evening! Louise was pretty, and moreover had that charm I could never resist, a dainty foot. She was clean to the last detail of her toilet. It was hot and she was wearing a loose house dress; a fold of gauze scarcely veiled her bosom, making it the more seductive. . . . After supper we went to sit by the window on the Rue Babille, and I put my arm about her unlaced waist and kissed her cheek. Smiling, Louise drew the curtain, and I took her upon my knees. I begged for a kiss and it was at last bestowed on me by the prettiest of mouths. . . . What sweet rapture! . . . Near to succumbing to her charms, I rose: "I must leave you, dear Louise; you are too seductive. I cannot trust myself." "No, stay! . . . I am all alone, and I shall be so dull." "Then what am I to do to preserve the respect owing to you?" Louise's answer surprised me more than anything that had gone before: "To inspire passion in a man whom . . . she so much likes . . . is too flattering to a girl for her to be offended. . . ." "You comfort me, fair Louise. . . . But I would like to prove how dear you are to me by controlling the impetuous desires excited by your beauty . . . your graces . . . your charms . . . your allurements. . . .

Yes, my tenderness and my esteem, and your brother's trust in me, shall overcome them." And in fact I did control myself; but it seemed to me that Louise strove more than once to shake my resolution. I did not leave her until midnight.

I called on her at nine o'clock next morning. She was in bed, and an honest woman who did her housework and her shopping was with her. Louise had a sore throat. I administered mulberry syrup, and concocted her a drink of ripe figs. She gave me her hand and I sat holding it in mine for more than an hour. At about eleven a friend from the *Rue de Bourbon-Petits-Carreaux* called to see her; a tall, slight girl, pretty and gay and apparently of a very affectionate disposition; she was the image of Émilie Laloge. She was much distressed by Louise's indisposition, and, taking off her dress, set about waiting upon her in her corset. She looked like a nymph. I had an errand to do for Louise. Before I went out, Thérèse had regarded me with a sort of cold curiosity, but when I came back her manner was frank and familiar and she adroitly introduced into everything she said some subtle and delicate eulogy of her Louise. She treated me as a friend, ordering me about, taking me by the hand, and, once when I was kissing Louise's hand, she pressed her pretty lips to my cheek, saying: "I love everyone who loves my Louise." More than twenty girls called to see Alan in the course of the afternoon, and all of them pretty; and this surprised me as much as had everything else. In the evening Thérèse was obliged to leave us. "Go if you must," said Louise, "but Monsieur Bertrô will not let you go anywhere alone. . . . You do like my friend?" "Do I like him! Do I not always agree with Louise?" And she kissed me. . . . I took Thérèse home at midnight. . . . Ah, how she loved Louise! How she praised her! She spoke from her heart. . . . "How everyone loves her!" I thought to myself. I found that Thérèse was better off than Louise; her apartment was still in some disorder as she had only just moved in, but she had some good furniture and a maid to wait on her. I could not help having certain doubts. . . . And yet Louise's modesty and her friend's behaviour left me still uncertain.

On my return we decided that I should spend the night in an armchair near to my fair one. I waited on Louise and made much of her, but more as a father than as a lover. She went to sleep and I grew drowsy in my turn, and did not wake until four o'clock. Louise was still asleep, but she woke almost at once and I fetched her some syrup. I held the cup for her, and she kissed my hand afterwards. "Ah!" I exclaimed, much affected, "I shall return that kiss upon your pretty mouth. . . ." And I gave her a hundred. Then I saw that Louise was weeping. "What is the matter, sweet friend?" "I cannot hold my tongue any longer," she answered. "But you must come and sit beside me." "You are ill. . . ." "Hardly at all now." "I cannot and will not listen to anything until you are well. . . . I do not want you to talk, I will not have it!" "But what I want to tell you is important." "I do not wish to hear it at the expense of your health. . . . I adore you, Louise, and nothing can ever extinguish this sweet emotion in my heart." "Nothing?" "Nothing, my child. . . . But do not talk." "Very well, I will be silent; but remember that I wanted to speak!" "Yes, I will date whatever you have to tell me from this moment." I prevented her from replying, and settled down in the armchair beside her with my head upon her pillow. Directly I saw that she was asleep again I got up to prepare what she would need on waking. This was one of the pleasantest nights of my life; for it is an exquisite pleasure to nurse a beautiful young girl, whom one is beginning to love, through a slight indisposition. At seven o'clock Louise woke up, and I gave her some biscuit soup, as I had gathered from a remark she had made to Thérèse that she was very fond of it. The latter arrived almost at the same moment, and I went out to my work, pledged to return for dinner.

I reappeared at two o'clock, and was received as a god by both the friends; Thérèse seemed anxious to outdo Louise. Our invalid was much better and took a light dinner. Afterwards we played at dominoes for very small stakes; a little skilful bad play on my part and the two friends won; this always contributes to good humour even among the most unselfish. However Thérèse found me out at last and scolded me in a whisper. "To lose is irritating," I answered. "Do you not see that I am doing it for Louise and that you only profit through her?" "You are a good friend, and charming! . . . And I shall tell Louise so."

We were even merrier at supper than over the game. Louise, now almost well, was charming, and Thérèse was ecstatically happy; she fondled Louise like a lover. "You must not die," she said to her. "I could never survive you! . . . Take care of her for me!" "You are going to take her home," Alan said to me. "She has something to tell you. Then come back here. I will leave my key in the door, and you can come in quietly. If I am asleep, do not wake me, but do not go away. . . ." When we were ready to set out I took the two friends to the window overlooking the Rue Babille and, pointing to a beautiful star in the zenith, said: "Do you see that star?" "Yes!" they cried together. "That is Vega in Lyra, but I am going to change its name: henceforward I shall call it the Star of Louise! . . . And do you see that other constellation which follows after it?" "We see it: it is in the form of a cross." "Yes, but I shall never call it Cygnus again; I christen it the Star of Thérèse! And if we are ever parted, I shall say whenever I see those two constellations: 'Eternal stars, you remain for ever, but Louise and Thérèse are here no longer! . . .' " The two friends kissed me both at the same time, saying: "Ah, that came from the heart!" "Will you really say that, dear friend?" added Thérèse, kissing my cheek. "Yes, I shall say it all my life." "Then I shall say: 'Lovely Star of the 27th of July! Bertrô is looking at you now just as I am! . . .' But Louise will be your wife, so you will look at it together."

I took Thérèse home directly we had supped. Our pretty invalid went to bed, and instead of the key being left in the lock, Thérèse took it out and gave it to me. We had passed through the Nouvelle-Halle and were already in the *Rue de Sartine*, before she said: "My friend, you have behaved like an angel with Louise – yesterday, last night and to-day. She loves you with her whole heart, and you can keep her safe for me; for otherwise grief might have stolen her away. . . . She has charged me to tell you everything, but I confess that I am afraid to speak. . . . Are you sensitive on any points?" "What do you mean by that?" "Do you think certain things very important . . . a flower, for example?" "A flower?" ' Yes, a flower. . . . What is called a maid's rose . . . Because I warn you Louise has lost hers just as I have mine." "You are both charming," I answered (for I was beginning to understand), "and I prefer you with your disposition and without the rose to many women who have retained the latter!" "Ah, that comforts me! . . . Then I can tell you everything. . . . Louise's brother is not her brother, although he passes for such; he has been her lover since she was fourteen or fifteen, at which age he took her away from a dressmaker's. Now he is going to marry a wealthy woman; and Louise was in great distress about this when you saw her for the first time. The morning after your meeting, she hurried to my lodging full of your praises: 'Ah, if only a man like that could love me,' she said, 'I would give him my whole heart!' Then you came back and spoke of marriage, and Louise has said a thousand times to-day that she will give her life to make you happy. She has about fifteen thousand francs, which is profitably invested with a pawnbroker, and I have about thirty; so we have something coming in. I also have a friend of a certain age; I do not love him, but I respect him. He makes my life very comfortable, and I am scrupulously faithful to him. Louise and I have one quality in common, that of gratitude, and we have never given anything but good advice to one another. We desire each other's happiness with equal sincerity, and you will not doubt this when I tell you that we hold everything in common: what I have is hers as much as it is mine, and *vice versa.* I have had a hundred crowns a month for the last six months and she a hundred francs; this with the hundred that her lover gives her makes her as well-off as myself. We have entrusted our forty-five thousand francs to two well-established pawnbrokers, but if through any misfortune Louise's failed, she would only lose half of her capital, and she would have half of mine. When you are married I shall give her fifty crowns a month, and you will find that I am reliable. For four years I have loved Alan as a sister, and she has loved me. We were friends at school and, even as children, used to amuse ourselves by planning to hold everything in common. We have neither of us had more than one man.* One day Louise's lover tried to take liberties with me, but I showed him so clearly that he was out in his reckoning that he never meddled again. I told my friend about it for the first time only the other day, because the danger was then over. She was miserable before she met you, but she

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*About the same time or perhaps a little earlier, Mlle *Desglands* of the Italiens was a Thérèse to another Louise, and this association still continues. I heard the story from her own lips; she related it when dining with my good friend *Guillebert de Préval,* the doctor.

was saying to me just now: 'Good has come out of evil, for I would never have spoken to this gentleman if Monsieur Cellier had not been leaving me. He was the only nice man I had ever met; but now I see that there are others who surpass him in delicacy and sensibility.' And she gave me some examples of your . . . But I am doing all the talking. What do you think?" "It is my duty, Mademoiselle, to treat you with the same frankness that you have shown to me.

"When I first saw Mademoiselle Louise I was carried away by an emotion so ardent and at the same time so tender that I could not control it. I had no thoughts of marriage, and could have none; but your frankness. . . ." "What! You do not want . . ." "Deign to hear me, amiable Thérèse! I so need your esteem." "Ah, that reassures me a little!" "As I was saying, Mademoiselle, your frankness demands an equal frankness in me. . . . The word marriage was mentioned; I was confounded: but I was under so potent a charm that I could not bring myself to speak. I formed a resolution: it was to see Louise at sufficiently close quarters to conceive an adoration for her, and then immediately to withdraw; so that I might eternally regret her and weep over my ill-fortune for the rest of my life." "But why? What does this strange mania signify?" "That I have been married for twelve years!" "Ah, God! But," she added smiling, "you know us. Your marriage need be no obstacle. Louise would have been your wife; now she will be your mistress, and perhaps you will be happier so. . . . Let me talk to her, my poor Bertrô. . . ." "I am married, and an honest man," I answered. "I may go momentarily astray, but, dear Thérèse, would you have me ruin my home? . . ." "No, no! But for you to fall in love with someone else, your wife must have wronged you or taken a lover? Otherwise, as I know you, you would not have told my friend you loved her. I will arrange everything for you. . . . You understand? Love her and be happy, and be my friend, a man ready to serve me as one friend serves another. For I can rely on you; and the reward for your friendship will be to possess Louise. She is another me, and if I give her she will be given utterly. From the few words you have said, I understand your principles and approve of them, and when you cease to be a lover you will still be a firm friend." Overjoyed I kissed Thérèse, for passion blinded me: "Most amiable girl," I said. "You are enchanting, ravishing! But who taught you so much philosophy?" "Nature alone and certain books which fortify her teaching. I found a book in my friend's apartment, which I read, or rather devoured; it conformed to all my opinions concerning love. Moreover it roused the tenderest emotions. I think I still have it at home and will lend it to you."

Thérèse's lover, a man of from fifty-two to fifty-four years of age, was waiting for her on our arrival, and he showed some surprise at sight of me. "Do not be frightened," she said laughing. "Certainly he is my lover, but I only grant him favours in the person of Louise." His face cleared at these words. Thérèse handed me the little book she had promised me, which was in very bad condition. I opened it and recognised, with no little surprise, one of my own compositions: *La Fille Naturelle*! I blushed; but Thérèse could not read my thoughts. "Perhaps you have read it?" "Yes, but I will re-read it." As a matter of fact I have noticed that to re-read one's own work after it has been read by a person in whom one takes an interest and knowing the passages which have struck her, is one of the greatest pleasures that an author can enjoy. I left with the book, determining to have it bound before returning it.

I hesitated about going back to Alan, but my legs bore me thither without the permission of my will (as in former times they had to Zéphire!). I had her key: and this was a reason for returning which at once charmed and distressed me. She was asleep when I bent over her bed, and I stooped to kiss her forehead. Her arms retained me: "You know?" she said. "Yes, dear Louise." "Ah, you know, and I am still dear to you! . . . Then I am the happiest of girls." "Sweet friend, I shall love you till I breathe my last. . . ." She gave me a kiss. . . . "But," I continued, "Thérèse will talk to you to-morrow." "Very well, she shall talk to me. . . . But as you know. . . . Come, my friend . . . come. . . ." I came near to falling. But I made an effort over myself, which makes me shudder even now . . . (twenty-five years later, this 12th of September, 1797). . . . I tore myself from the arms which roused such burning desire, and said: "No! To-morrow . . . to-morrow Thérèse will speak to you." Louise seemed abashed and anxious. I showered respectful caresses upon her, in the course of which she ventured on a question or two, and my answers satisfied her that I knew everything. I kissed her hands and, from time to time, touched the place where her head had rested with my lips. Tears were flowing from her beautiful eyes. "Everything that you do touches my heart! O Bertrô, how I wish I was what you thought me at first! . . . But it will only make me love you more tenderly, dear friend, and from this moment you are master of my body; it is as much yours as mine. . . . Act as its master then, dear lover, dear husband. . . ." After some more of such talk I handed her the book which her friend had lent me. She told me that it was the same one that she had wanted to show me the day we were together at her neighbours'. "I shall read it with all the more pleasure for that," I answered. At last I left her, much against my inclination! She made me take away her key, "so that," as she said, "I shall see you again as soon as I desire."

My mind was busy with a multitude of thoughts as I walked homewards: "So I am beloved once more! . . . But alas, what a difference between this child, sweet as she is, and Mademoiselle Rose Bourgeois and her sister Eugénie!" And I was still revolving a thousand conflicting and contradictory ideas when I arrived. It occurred to me to marry under the name of Bertrô, taking only Thérèse into my confidence; but I scarcely entertained this plan for a moment. I slept little, and my drowsing was disturbed by dreams. I rose early because of Louise's key, which I had gladly accepted and now was vexed to have. I opened her door softly at seven o'clock; she pretended to be asleep. I bent over her and touched her parted lips with my own. She shivered slightly. "Sleep on, fair angel . . ." I exclaimed, and went to the fireplace; but she opened her eyes and called to me, and I returned to her side. Her bosom was half uncovered; she held out her hand. . . . I confess that I could not have governed myself that morning as I had the day before, had not Thérèse arrived.

Thérèse thought that we had passed the night together, and that everything was explained between us. She embraced me, saying: "Better to be fond lovers than a quarrelsome married couple. I congratulate you both on your delightful night." "He has only just come!" said Louise smiling. "My friend treats me in a manner that enchants me. The more he differs from other men, the more I like him. . . . But he told me yesterday evening that you had something to say to me?" "In that case," said Thérèse, "let us have breakfast quickly. The chocolate is being brought up, and afterwards, Monsieur, you will go about your business for a couple of hours, and then come back again." "Do not send him away!" complained Alan prettily. "He always goes soon enough of his own accord!" During breakfast Thérèse was not her usual merry self. She showed another side of her character; and, sensitive and caressing, prepared her friend for what she had to tell her with an intelligence and art that charmed me. At times she held us together on her lap and, with her arms about us, compelled us to exchange such kisses as *Martial* speaks of:

Basia blandas imitata columbas. . . .

which the Greeks called by so sweet a name: *mandalôton.* When we had finished breakfast she took my hand, and said: "Bertrô, I thought of nothing but you two last night. You would have been too happy if Louise had been a virgin and you a bachelor! . . . Such happiness is not made for mortals. . . ." She held us close together, her eyes wet with tears. "Ah, what is best to be done?" She reflected a moment, and then with an impulsive yet calculated movement she again pressed us the one against the other, saying: "It must be, and now." And Louise found herself . . . in my arms . . . and I found myself . . . in her. . . . My whole soul passed into that charming body through the delicious vehicles of pleasure; through her divine mouth, through . . . Nature's unnameable treasure. . . . Thérèse mingled her caresses with ours. . . . At last she drew us apart. "It is I who give her to you; and it is I, not she, who part you. . . . Go now, my friend, and come back in an hour or two, or sooner if it is possible." I was already at the door when she recalled me: "Are you not going to kiss her?" I kissed Alan's hand, and she threw herself upon my breast. . . . A sad, despairing thought rose from the depths of my heart and, taking Louise and Thérèse by the hand, I led them to the window, and we all three leaned in silence on the sill. I fixed my eyes upon a little deep-set door in the Rue d'Orléans, and said to myself: "It is from that door that I shall henceforward gaze at Louise's window and mourn for these two sweet girls, whom I must never see again. . . . A life opposed to decent conduct once begun would become habitual, and then I know that I could not continue to be a good father; I may perhaps be excused from being a good husband, but our life must not become a public scandal. Unpremeditated and passing faults pertain to human frailty; but to persist in them is to be a dishonest man." Thus I reflected inwardly and without opening my mouth, at the same time pressing a hand of either girl against my heart. "I am throwing away happiness," I thought. "I know it, but I must take courage . . . *Virtus est placitis abstinuisse bonis!* . . . How pleasant would be my life with these two girls! Working in peace and comfort. . . . But how could I ever utter the word virtue? . . . Come, get it over!" "You are deeply moved," said Thérèse. "Oh, yes. . . . My future is in the balance." I kissed Louise three times, and Thérèse twice. . . . I paused to kiss Louise's hair as I went towards the door, and Thérèse's glove which lay upon a sideboard near to it. I said: "Farewell!" in a choking voice and left them.

A woman who lived on the same landing, the mother of one of Audinot's actresses, was coming upstairs, and I had to wait until she had entered her apartment. Thus I overheard Thérèse saying to Louise: "My friend recognised him from having seen him in Le Jay's bookshop! He is the author of that book you like so much, *La Fille Naturelle*!" "Good heavens!" "And of the *Lettres d'une Fille à son Père*, which I will bring to you. . . ." That was all I heard; I dared not stay, because the neighbour had left her door open. I went down slowly, gazing at every step, which I had so many times ascended with a beating heart during the last few days, and thought dejectedly: "You will never take me to Louise again! This is the last day on which I shall ever tread this staircase, the last on which I shall be close to Louise's dwelling. Every step takes me farther away, and for ever! . . . Farewell, my dear Louise! A word, a single word has just recalled me to myself and to my duty. . . . Ah, Louise, if I were free, you and your amiable friend would for ever be my sole companions. Sweet girls, I shall never see you again!" I sobbed despite myself as I went down, and my tears flowed freely directly I was in the street. At the corner of the *Rue des Vieilles-Étuves* I looked back, and caught a glimpse of Thérèse, who made a friendly gesture. . . . It was the last I ever saw of her at that time! . . . Once round the corner, it was as though I had set an ocean between Louise, Thérèse and myself. We did not meet again for twelve years! . . .

Deep sensibilities, O my Reader, give a different colour to experience and lend an interest to every incident! Many men would have seen two *Misses* in Louise and Thérèse, and nothing more, but I found two beautiful souls, two such friends as Loiseau and I had been; I found new food for my sensibility. Twice I caught a glimpse of Louise after I had relinquished her: once a week later from a staircase opposite, supping sadly with Thérèse; once a fortnight after, crossing the Nouvelle-Halle. Every evening for twelve years (for sixteen years) (for eighteen years) (for twenty years) (for twenty-five years), during the season when Lyra stands directly above the Nouvelle-Halle, I have gone to the quarter where I knew Louise, and, gazing up at Lyra and Cygnus, mourned for the happiness I might have enjoyed if elementary social laws had not opposed it. I begin my watches on the 9th of July and end them on the 9th of August. For the first two or three days I sit on the iron-moulding opposite No. 14, and tearfully intone the names, Louise and Thérèse. For the next few days I approach by the *Rue des Vieilles-Étuves*, advancing slowly with my eyes fixed on the window I leaned out of with Louise, and whence I had seen that last friendly gesture of Thérèse. Tears run down my cheeks, and I say, shuddering: "O Louise, did you hate and despise me? . . . Thérèse, did you guess my motives? Sweet girls, may you both be happy!" And I turn away, after having given free course to my tears. . . . On the eighth day I approach the Nouvelle-Halle by the *Rue de Bourbon*; I kiss Thérèse's door, and sometimes go up to her landing. . . . And I weep. . . . I think Louise is happy. I met her in the September of this year, 1784, leaning on a man's arm; she was well dressed and it looked to me as though they were married. I gazed at her hungrily, but I did not speak, and she did not notice me. But it was she; my heart told me so.* Reader, reflect a moment! This was the only occasion in my life when I displayed so much virtue; and what inspired it? Two kept women, just as formerly it was Zéphire who restored my chastity. That one exquisite possession which so nearly cemented my attachment to Louise and to Thérèse was no frailty; I know how it happened, and my senses responded against my will. . . . I swear before God, I did not want it. Thérèse, O divine Thérèse, how, how did you compass that celestial gesture which still commands my adoration? . . . How, how did you guide, compel . . . maintain me . . .? You did me violence, and I adore you for it; I adore you as much, ay, more perhaps, for that deed, which I then believed a crime, than for all your real and touching virtues which I so much appreciated! Dear Reader, her action was no sin, for she has been rewarded for it. . . .

Twelve years passed away; I had seen Louise, but had concealed myself from her; my heart was as soft towards her as on the day we parted. . . . I used still to wander through the Nouvelle-Halle, wrapped in a tender

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*All this, as will be seen, took place before I met my two friends again. . . . For the details I have omitted, see the play entitled Louise and Thérèse in my *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 660-725.

melancholy. Finally, one evening, I saw . . . a tall woman leading two little girls by the hand, one eleven and the other six years old. She caught my attention, and I approached her. It was Thérèse! I recognised her at once. I was bolder in friendship than in love. We were in the year 1785, and I was just recovering from an illness; I was . . . in a pitiable state. . . . I had just finished writing my *Contemporaines*, and publishing my *Paysanne*. I took Thérèse's hand: "You will have condemned me without a hearing. Will you listen to me now?" "Ah, wretch! You thrust a knife into my heart. . . ." I had to support her. . . . "I am an object of horror to you! I will go away." "He would leave me to die!" "No, no, my daily mourned Thérèse!" "Mourned! I! Mourned! . . . And Louise . . ." "Are you separable?" "Come and see her, then . . . she is dying. . . . You will receive her last breath . . . or . . . you will save her. . . ." I took her back to the Rue Babille, we went upstairs and Thérèse approached the invalid alone.

"Dear friend . . . would you like to see. . . . Be calm . . . but a shock might save you perhaps! . . . *Bertrô* . . . is . . . here!" "Bertrô! . . ." The dying woman raised herself. . . . "Where is he?" I was at her side in a flash, pressing her to my heart. "Bertrô . . . I . . . have never . . . borne you any grudge. . . . You did it . . . because it was right. . . ." She could say no more. . . . A little cordial was administered, and I laid her head upon my left shoulder and held her thus. "I die . . . content. . . . Speak of me sometimes. . . ." "Every day!" I exclaimed. "What will you say?" "Louise was our Divinity. . . ." "And we will weep for you until the day of our death," exclaimed Thérèse.

Louise smiled; doubtless her heart dilated too abruptly, for she died upon that smile. . . . We could not leave her; her husband and Thérèse's had to drag us away. . . .

Every year thereafter I have visited Thérèse on the anniversary of that day, which fell within the sacred period between the 9th of July and the 9th of August. I enter the apartment, and if she is alone we kiss each other; if people are present, I whisper: "Louise was our Divinity!" And she: "And we will mourn for her till the day of our death!" This has gone on for twelve years, for it was only in this present year, 1796, that I suffered the irreparable loss of Thérèse herself! She died on the 22nd of August, her head upon that same shoulder whereon had died Zéphire, Amélie, and Louise. . . . Oh, I can scarcely write it, the tears gush forth from me! At sixty-three, overwhelmed with sufferings and disappointments and infirmities, I have lost Thérèse who could have solaced me; and with her I have finally lost Louise, my last love! Open, O grave! I have nothing now to stay for! Yet . . . something is still left to me . . . as you will see, Reader. Let us return.

The day after Louise's death, I called for Thérèse and we followed our friend to the grave, and the earth that covered her was watered by our tears. . . . We stood, our arms about each other's waists. I scarcely left her during the days that followed. A few weeks later she told me how she had persuaded Louise to marry her first lover, the surgeon, who had become a widower, by herself marrying a friend of this man. She added: "You have a daughter by Louise." I was overjoyed. "She was the elder of the two children you saw with me on the day we met; the other one was my own daughter. Louise's daughter is in a Convent, preparing for her first Communion." We left the matter there, but on my visits to Thérèse when I used to see her own three children, I would always ask after my *Alanette*, to whom, before I was introduced to her, I gave the name of *Filette* in my memoranda.

One evening in 1789, as I was walking down the Rue Honoré near by the Rue d'Orléans, my attention was attracted by a young woman; she was with child, and I was struck by her beauty. Thereafter I would go to look at her every evening and with so great a satisfaction that something was lacking to my day if I did not see her. In 1793 I mentioned her to Thérèse, and she asked me where she lived. I told her and the very next day as I passed by, I saw Thérèse herself with the charming clock-maker's wife. I halted in surprise, she beckoned to me, and I joined her eagerly. Thérèse whispered something to Alanette, or Filette, and the fair girl blushed and looked at me. "Kiss your daughter and Louise's," said Thérèse. I thought happiness would choke me as my lips touched that charming face! "I kiss Louise," I murmured.

From that moment I had some consolation, that is, when my daughter's troubles did not change it into bitterness. I was aware that her father had married her without even mentioning the matter to Thérèse. She hid nothing from me. . . . And I have realised, especially since Thérèse's death, that every new affection opens the door more readily to sorrow than to happiness.

I have carried the story of Louise and Thérèse* to its conclusion. . . . But who could express how bitterly I wept for them before we found each other again; how I weep for them now that they are finally lost to me! It is true that what remains to me of Louise adds a charm to my life, but the

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*The story of Louise and Thérèse is one of the most celebrated episodes of *Monsieur Nicolas*. Lacroix called it "an incomparable masterpiece of French literature, worthy to be ranked with *Manon Lescaut*." Funck-Brentano also reckons these pages among the best in French literature; and Bloch is scarcely less appreciative. Restif brought the story with variations into three others of his books, but that in *Monsieur Nicolas* is regarded as the best, though the much earlier version in *Les Nuits* is no doubt more true to the actual facts. [Ed.]

special charm of love and friendship and equality cannot exist between a father and his daughter. . . . Now I mourn for Louise alone; I mourn for Thérèse with none to comfort me. . . . At times I cry aloud: "O my friends, if it were all to do again, no fatal virtue should ever sunder me from you!"

Louise! Thérèse! The last to charm my heart! I wept for you yesterday (September the 14th, 1796), and never felt your loss more bitter than after a lapse of twenty-four years! I gazed at Lyra, I gazed at Cygnus and, bursting into tears, exclaimed: "Eternal stars, you remain for ever, but Louise and Thérèse are no longer here! Celestial friends, I fled from you! Twelve years are cancelled from my life during which I never saw you: twelve years which I would buy back with my blood! Farewell, Louise! Farewell, Thérèse!" And I entered the house I used to visit in 1772. I have never gone up and never will go up those stairs again to see Louise, to see Thérèse! . . . I left the house heart-broken. . . . I tried to see my daughter, but she was ill. . . .

I was as one dead after I had deprived myself of the company of Louise and Thérèse, and no other girl attracted me until the 22nd of June, 1776, when I made the acquaintance of Virginie. I will describe this adventure when the order of events brings me to it. Now I will return to the history of my literary productions.

I was working on *La Femme dans les Trois États* when I met Louise and after I ceased my visits to her on the 9th of August. The printing of this little book, the third part of which contains certain contemporary anecdotes, was begun on the 4th of June, but it did not appear until February 1773. In the meanwhile I continued my *Ecole des Pères*. My next production was a sort of farcical romance called *Le Ménage Parisien*; the plot was excellent and had appealed to me, but the development of it proved to be beyond my powers, and this, my pleasantest conception, only produced a very mediocre book. M. de Crébillon the younger, who was my censor, did not think much of it, yet he put it somewhat above *Le Pied de Fanchette*, which he had also approved. (He was quite wrong. *Le Pied de Fanchette* is very much better thought of now than *Le Ménage*, and has reached its third edition.) A note occurs in *Le Ménage Parisien* which was the origin of my friendship with Dr *de Préval*. Here it is: "*Nothing could be more worthy of us* (fools) *than the conduct of the Faculty with regard to M. Guillebert de Préval! This dangerous man of ability has, it is said, discovered a Water which will preserve foolish and clever men alike from a grievous malady! The Faculty, which is* Orbi et Urbi salus, *reflected on the heavy profits which this unnatural child would steal away from its mother, and resolved to disinherit him and lay the weight of its maternal curse upon him.*" (Part II, Note p. lxiv. . . .) No doubt this book would have been excellent if I had not been overwhelmed with grief for the loss of Louise and Thérèse! None the less, both books had some success: *La Femme dans les Trois États* has been reprinted; *Le Ménage* has been out of print for some time and I propose to offer it, fully revised, to anyone who will produce another edition.

Besides these novels, and *L'École des Pères* which I printed for the bookseller Drastoc under the title of *Le Nouvel Émile*, I was working by fits and starts at *Le Paysan perverti*, which had been begun in 1769, and had now reached the third volume.

About mid-November Nougaret showed me the manuscript of a novel by M. Marchand, my censor for *Le Pornographe* and author of *La Requête du Curé de Fontenoy*, etc. It was dead, colourless stuff, and I decided to put a little life into it. It was called *Mémoires de M. d'Armantières*, and introduced a certain M. *Duchauffour* as the father of the heroine, *Placidie.* These names belonged to real people, or so it was said, and I changed them on the advice of my censor, *Coqueley.* I added the story of Zoé, wrote almost the whole of the second part, gave the book this arresting title: *Nouveaux Mémoires d'un Homme de Qualité*, which suited it well enough, and concluded it with my *Beaux Rêves*, in one of which I foretold the birth of a Dauphin, a safe enough prediction seeing that both husband and wife were young, amorous and strong. In another (the second) I avenged my friend Dr de Préval for his persecution by the Faculty, and in a pleasant enough manner, as can be seen at the end of *La Découverte Australe*, where I reprinted it under the burlesque title, *Iatromachie*, as *Nouveaux Mémoires* was out of print.

In 1773 I made the acquaintance of *Rosette Vaillant*, the model. (See my *Calendar.*)

The printing of my *Nouveaux Mémoires* was begun in January 1774 and finished in the month of May. Work on *L'École des Pères* had been interrupted, so I reprinted *Le Pornographe* and *La Fille Naturelle.* Towards the end of the year, Edme Rapenot showed me a translation of *François de Quevedo*'s *Grand Tacagno* by Dhermilly the censor. I found it so bad that I advised him not to print it. I finished *Le Paysan* and offered it to the bookseller Delalain the elder. He refused it, because his reader had noticed that some of the Letters were as badly written as those of a peasant and told him that this would prevent the book from selling. On the suggestion of this acute critic, Delalain advised me to change the title, and I was tempted to do so. Luckily, however, I did nothing of the sort! Through Valade's influence I obtained Dhermilly as censor for *Le Paysan*, and thus was often in the way of seeing this honest fellow. He offered me his rendering of *Grand Tacagno,* which he translated as *Fin Matois.* I agreed to print it on condition that he lent me the original and helped me to correct anything that I could not understand. I may say that I entirely re-wrote this translation from the original; Dhermilly had turned the book into a milk-and-water affair, quite deficient in the spicy flavour which was its character. More than this, I completed Quevedo's novel with a third part, consisting of seven chapters entirely of my own composition. I added notes, a short life of Quevedo, a review of his works and a much appreciated article on the Inquisition of *La Cuença.* So the book was practically my work. I paid Dhermilly twenty-five louis and presented him with as many copies as he wanted to pass on. In the meanwhile Drastoc was made a bankrupt and forced me to cancel bills to the value of a thousand crowns which I held in payment for all the books with which I had supplied him, and in addition to pay twelve hundred livres for the return of the incomplete *École des Pères.* I gave him five hundred copies of *Fin Matois* to make up the twelve hundred livres, returned his bills and his receipts for the books I had delivered to him, and he gave me back half of my book in sheets.* I was obliged to incur considerable expense to make it saleable, and finally left it incomplete; there is only a summary of the fourth volume. A still severer sacrifice was forced upon me. I had mortgaged Drastoc's bills for a thousand francs, and to repay these I was obliged to sell some copies of *Femme-Trois États, Le Ménage Parisien* and *Nouveaux Mémoires* to *Dehansy* at ten sous a copy instead of forty; that is to say, I had to part with two thousand copies instead of five hundred. Thus I lost a thousand crowns in hard cash, since the three books sold to the last copy. This business with Drastoc was the most ruinous of all those in which I had been the loser. It cost me fifteen thousand livres.

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*The other half was retained by Reinruof, the dishonest administrator for Drastoc's creditors. Reinruof was stupid enough to put his imprint on what he stole from me, but my dislike for business prevented me from prosecuting him.

I began printing *Le Paysan perverti* in May or June of 1779, immediately after the completion of *Fin Matois*. I was suffering much at the time from a stricture, a sequel to my painful illness of 1770. I used Dr de Préval's curative lotion, a most efficaceous solvent. It penetrates the flesh, and at the end of a month, during which I bathed the afflicted part almost continuously with it, I found sudden relief. Since then I have never endured the cruel agonies to which I was subject while printing *Fin Matois*; usually my urine escaped drop by drop, but one day there was a complete stoppage. I think that my illness was occasioned by that charlatan Nicole Marsan, who insisted on sounding me to no purpose.

In 1773 a very favourable change occurred in my circumstances. Agnès Lebègue had taken it into her head that she had a gift for education. I doubted if she had any more talent for this than for commerce, but I never argued about such things. She took some pupils to board and, with the consent of their parents, established herself in the provinces, where the fees sufficed for the upkeep of herself and her pupils. She left her daughter Agnès in Paris with a Mme Marie, milliner and jeweller on the Quai de Gèvre. She gave her full instructions before departing, and she did not spare me in the process. This ill-balanced woman thought she could do without me and be sufficient to herself; as was Progrès' wife, but with somewhat better qualifications. She regarded me as destitute of all merit and of any business capacity whatsoever. It must be admitted that at the time I was being gulled by such as Michel, Gauguery, Drastoc and Edme Rapenot, all of whom cheated me. And this not to mention the widow

Tirpse* of the Palais Égalité, who only cheated me out of fifty crowns – a detestable swindle, certainly, because the motive for it was avarice, but the loss to me was inconsiderable; dishonest *Maisonneuve*, widow *Duchesne's* factotum, who prevented the payment of thirty thousand livres to me; *M****,† the bookseller, whose failure has left me, on this 20th of August, 1790, in the greatest distress; the jovial *Mourant*, who only stole a hundred crowns from me; and the late foreman *Caillion*, who stole a hundred and sixty reams of paper at twelve livres the ream, etc. Here is an anecdote about the widow *Tirpse*, who, poor soul, only possessed six hundred thousand livres; I witnessed the incident myself: Demonville's little errand boy brought her six copies of M. Garat's *Éloge de Fontenelle*, at thirty sous the copy. A customer bought one and took it, not from the widow's six, but from some other copies which the child had with him. The widow took the money and then paid for her six copies, which was not her practice, as she usually did not pay until a long time after the books had been sold. When the boy returned Demonville found him one copy short and made him pay for it. Then the child remembered what had happened, and realised that his missing copy was the one the widow Tirpse had sold. He ran to her, explained the position, and asked for his thirty sous. I was in the shop at the time: she would not even condescend to listen to him, she would not count her copies; the child wept, she pushed him out of doors. I was indignant, and was tempted to give to him his thirty sous myself.

Agnès Lebègue was in an ecstasy of joy at leaving me. She took all the furniture, all the linen, although it had belonged to my mother, and departed with my daughter Marion and her pupils, leaving me with four walls and a pallet. I confess that I was no less pleased than she. Her peevish temper and obvious loathing of me, which she tried to instil into the two children, had made her an intolerable burden. I could breathe again and work undisturbed; and if I often wanted for necessities, at least my sufferings were not aggravated by a fury who was always ready to thwart me in every slightest thing. Seeing her depart with all our furniture, someone asked her what she had left for me. "My debts," she answered laconically; and these amounted to twelve hundred livres. But this was not the worst: she forgot to add that she had also left me the hatred and contempt of all those in our circle who were more her friends than mine. Our chief creditor was the baker, M. *Froger* of the Rue Saint-André-des-Arcs. We owed him six hundred livres. We had agreed that I should pay him in bills, but as those I held were on booksellers who were no longer solvent, I had to pay off the debt week by week out of what I earned by reading proofs and on such few sales as I could make. Now Froger had a very pretty daughter, who did his errands to us while Agnès Lebègue was living with me, and the latter gave her the impression that I was an ogre. Quite unconsciously I confirmed this impression, for, having noticed that the girl was pretty, I avoided speaking to her when I was alone in the house, and used to talk to her without opening the door. So far I was merely regarded as something of a bear, and there was no great harm in that. But the day before she left, Agnès Lebègue reflected that the pretty Froger might be sent to collect the money if I failed to pay the bill, and was afraid that I would then show myself in a somewhat more favourable light. So she told her that I was so brutally lustful after women that, if she came to the house while I was alone, she would do well never to pass my threshold, but to stay outside the door, as otherwise I would turn the key and throw myself upon her! The girl was thoroughly frightened. She refused to call again and again, until at last her mother had to make the journey. I received her civilly. "There is nothing terrible about that man," she said to her daughter. "Oh, not with you!" "What do you mean, with me? Do you think you are a Venus, Miss? All right, you shall go next time." And in effect the parents united in forcing *Panette* Froger to call for the week's money. It was in the morning. She knocked softly. I was working, and jumped out of bed half-naked, asking who was there. When a girl's voice replied I opened the door. The blushing Panette remained outside while I dressed. I counted out the money. "Will you be so good as to come in, Mademoiselle, and rest a little?" (I had a room in the Rue du Fouarre on the half landing between the fourth and fifth floors.) Poor trembling Panette did not know what to do. I addressed her again with the greatest politeness. "I should prefer it if you were rude, Monsieur." "That would be impossible with you. I know that your parents agreed to furnish Agnès Lebègue with money to be credited to me as bread, but I see nothing in that but kindness to my belongings and confidence in my honesty. Sit down, Mademoiselle." Too shy to refuse, she sat down on the edge of a chair by the door, which was left wide open. In the meanwhile my eyes dropped at every word to Panette's little feet, which were quite charming! . . . She jumped with every movement I made. As I do not like the door open, I started to shut it. "Ah, Monsieur, have pity on me," she exclaimed, and she fell at my feet. I raised her up and asked her what was the matter. "Open the door," she said in a stifled voice. Thinking she wanted fresh air, I opened the door and all four windows, and then continued counting out the money, showing from time to time my concern for the health of my pretty visitor, who remained sitting by the front door a long way from me. Finally I handed her the money and insisted on helping her downstairs; in fact I almost carried her. What was my astonishment to see her start running like the wind directly she was in the street! . . . I was completely at a loss! In the following week, however, her mother, enchanted by my promptitude and civility, and by my moderate attitude towards the loans made to Agnès Lebègue (for she feared that I would be furious if I ever heard about them), revealed the steps my wife had taken, and the ruinous reputation she had given me. . . . This did not much surprise me; but I was very indignant with her for forbidding our eldest daughter, aged fourteen years, to come and see me alone. One of her friends was always sent with her. (Is it strange after this that I have dipped my brushes in the gall of bitterness diluted with the black of the Furies?) . . . I did not like Agnès's friend, and finally decided to tell my daughter to spend her Sundays with Mlle Froger; then the two girls could visit me together, and we would have something to eat. The two little girls amused me with their childish ways and their jealousy in the matter of shoes. "Your shoes are smarter than mine!" Agnès would say. "That is because my foot is smaller," was the answer. I had shoes made for both children by the shoemaker employed by Madame Dubarry and the Marquise de Marigny, as they had similar feet. It was a pleasure to see them the first Sunday that they put them on. They compared their feet. "Equal!" said Agnès. "Yours are nicer," answered Panette out of politeness. "No!" "Yes!" I restored harmony by taking their feet upon my knee and scrutinising the pretty shoes. I paid Panette for the week's bread, and the children went back after they had had something to eat.

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*Esprit. [Ed.]

†Maradan. [Ed.]

Sometimes Agnès would take her turn at minding the shop, and then pretty Panette used to come alone. One day she said to me: "I have some news for you." "What is it, pretty one?" "I am going to be married." "To whom?" "To a butcher." "A butcher!" "Yes, and he is very well off, and like you." "Like . . . like me!" "Yes, he is fond of . . ." "What is he fond of?" "That." "That?" "That," pointing to her feet. "Oh, I understand! It is obvious that you are innocent, or you could not have said *he is fond of that* without blushing." "Why?" "That, when it is said as you said it, has something to do with what happens to brides. . . ." To my shame be it admitted that my remark was prompted by sheer pleasure in licentiousness. "What happens to them?" I tried to kiss her. She resisted, but I seized and clasped her in my arms, treating her as I had done Toinette in the old days. She lost her balance owing to her slender heels, and fell across the foot of my bed, and . . . carried away, beside myself . . . I caressed her out of all prudence. She succumbed, perhaps willingly. . . . She lay like one dead after the act, and then, coming to herself with a sigh, began to weep. She did not reproach me, but she begged me almost on her knees to tell no one, and I reassured her with so much tenderness that at last the smiles came back to her face and she left me. (For the rest of this adventure, see my *Calendar.*)

After young Froger was married I saw no more of her, and my daughter Agnès came alone; so as to avoid giving even an apparent justification for the wicked slander which Agnès Lebègue continued to put about concerning me with reference to my daughter (and especially since I had given her, as I had also given her mother, a pair of *Bourbon* shoes), I abandoned myself to prostitutes. I met *Agathine* in the Nouvelle-Halle, and for a moment mistook her for Louise, an error which led to my possessing her. Another evening I met *Dubreuil* near the Oratory and mistook her, in her calash, for *Saint-Cyr*; this woman put me in the way of having pretty *Naïs Filon*, after I had had another of her girls. I revisited *Rose Gauthier*, Mme *Devimes* (whose first night I had had when she was *Manon Maret*), Mme *Saniez* and *Rosalie Prudhomme*, the third girl of that name whom I had possessed. I had a strange adventure with the Mlles *Decour*, the most beautiful of whom had lost her looks through the fatigues of love, while the third sister was more amiable and more seductive than ever. In the Nouvelle-Halle I also met *Aurore-Manon Parisot*, the *false Parisot*, *Aglaé Solle*, *Dorée*, and capricious *Julie Détange*. Finally I amused myself with little Amélie, so called by me in memory of Zéphire's friend. All of which brings me to my important affair with *Virginie*. . . .

My readers will remember that print seller, Chéreau de Villefranche, who was mentioned when I was living opposite the Fontaine Saint-Severin. He had renewed his intimacy with Agnès Lebègue, and as she left a large room empty when she went to the provinces, she bequeathed him to me as a boarder. He was now a widower, and it was his children, both boys and girls, who were being brought up by the incapable Agnès. His daughter was a gentle, lovable child, and as she had been born at a suitable interval after my afternoon adventure with his wife, that cynical philosopher Chéreau-Villefranche did all he could to persuade me during our conversations at dinner and supper that I was her father. Although I was very fond of little Philibertine, the man's impudence annoyed me, and sometimes I suspected him of designs. He had acquired many vices during his seven years' imprisonment with the *Bons-Hommes* of *Saint-Venant*, and one, among others, which always filled me with horror. Having noticed this, he invited a young clerk named Asselin to live with him, a bad character who had been one of Agnès Lebègue's lovers – which was precisely the reason why they foregathered. This Asselin (who died in 1781)*

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*He made Agnès Lebègue his heir, but we found out afterwards that the nuns and a certain *Canon of Chartres* suppressed the will.

was so impudent that, when Agnès Lebègue dismissed him after having shown him some complacence, he had the audacity to treat her like a public woman, and come to the house one morning on purpose to make an uproar under cover of a feigned despair. I overheard the quarrel, and had not the least idea what it was about; but at last, as the noise disturbed my work, I jumped out of bed to ask the man what he wanted. His reply was so extraordinary that I pushed him outside the door. He refused to go, and then in a rage I chased him to the staircase, where he spat horrible accusations against Agnès Lebègue. I was mortified by this terrible scene, which was characteristic of a brothel. . . . And in the face of all this, I broke with Louise and Thérèse! . . . It was obvious that I was in bad company with two such men as Chéreau de Villefranche and Asselin; but what could I do to get rid of them? Luckily they quarrelled over . . . a boy whom they had brought in, and whom they were going to . . . They began to fight, injured the child, and made such a horrible noise that it brought up the neighbours: Mme *Mezières* and her daughters, lawyer *Villeneuve* and his clerks. When I came in, they cried, directly they caught sight of me: "Did you leave the Devil in your apartment?" Villeneuve complained bitterly, and I responded by expressing my own views on the matter; and it was he who asked my two unpleasant lodgers to move. . . . Not until then did I feel free. . . .

To-day, the 9th of July, 1792, twenty years later and without interest or passion, I declare that I repent of having parted from Louise and Thérèse, that I loathe and curse that virtuous act! Virtue that brings unhappiness is not true virtue; it is only a hideous simulacrum of it!

But let us pause for a moment: my *Calendar* will supply what is omitted here. Let us dwell upon this memory, which a multitude of incidents brings back to me and which I can only now see through an enchanted prism. . . .

In the midst of all this trouble and such scenes as I have just described, I finished the fair copy of *Le Paysan perverti,* and began to print it. My compositor was a certain *Logerot,* whose mother was in easy circumstances, and he offered to advance me money on interest. I accepted four hundred livres to begin with, and gave him a bill at a year for four hundred and twenty. I was obliged to accept this loan, because F. A. Quillau, who had done so much printing for me and to whom I owed nothing, declared he would give me no more credit. Before her departure, Agnès Lebègue had frightened him with complaints about me and he regarded me as lacking in stability when left alone. . . . I took steps to dispose of the book directly I received the sheets. I had sold my share of the paternal inheritance to my peasant brother, and he paid me two thousand five hundred livres in the month of July. My wife was notified to give her signature and she hastened to obey the summons, and I was obliged to present her with about a thousand livres wherewith to buy goods. Fifteen hundred livres remained to me, and with these I produced my edition, which was finished in October. . . . This work was to bring about a change in my fortunes. Up to its publication I had remained unknown; even the success of my *Pornographe* had done little to lift me from obscurity: the book was anonymous, and as it brought me in nothing I had not emerged from the dust wherein I dwelt. The profit on subsequent productions had been swallowed up in household expenses or in discharging Drastoc's bills. At last, on the 1st of November, 1775, I distributed copies of *Le Paysan* to those booksellers who had agreed to take them, without the least suspicion of the success this book, which Delalain had scorned, was to have.

I have been honest with you, my Reader, as was necessary. I have revealed what none before me has revealed, not even J.-J. Rousseau: the complete life of a man. This is no pretty trifle in the manner of Marmontel, Gorgy, Laharpe, d'Alembert, Louvet and their like; I offer you a valuable supplement to *Buffon's* Natural History, to *Montesquieu's Esprit des Lois*, and to *Montaigne*.*

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*I am not unaware that all the jackanapes of letters, who are already up in arms against me, will fall upon this book, as they have fallen upon my Philosophy, of which the volume on Physics has just appeared. Injustice, stupidity and factional jealousy dictated the slanderous article written by some clown, supposed to be a member of the Institute. I have been well avenged to-day (1st Nov. 1796 – 11 Brumaire, 5) in a letter from a man of the highest merit; a letter which I shall print some day. He tells me that it was the Marquis de Villette's infamous pederast-valet who had the idiotic audacity to slander me in collusion with the vile, immoral, trigamous Scaturin! Did these three rogues unite against me, unaware that I am deficient neither in strength, courage, nor honour? I hereby notify the public that all the vilest parasites of literature are in league to exclude me from the *Institut National*. But would anyone believe who these *literary lice* (as my letter calls them) are? Their infamous names would pollute even this book which contains all my turpitude. And who told these wretches that I wanted to belong to the Institute? Have I taken a single step to do so? Have I been present at a single session? Base schemers, contemptible interlopers! I am not like you.

END OF SEVENTH EPOCH

EIGHTH EPOCH

LE PAYSAN PERVERTI AND SUBSEQUENT PRODUCTIONS

1775-1785

EIGHTH EPOCH

Le Paysan perverti and Subsequent Productions*

1775 – 1785

There are times when all is lawful, and a time
When the whole nation stands in need of crime,
Then he who raised his soul to evil could
By doing evil cause a lasting good.

These lines, taken from La Grange-Chancel's Sophonisbe, *are my reply to all the criticisms which have been levelled at my* Paysan perverti *by malicious, bigoted, or pusillanimous persons.*

LE PAYSAN PERVERTI had been on sale for more than a fortnight before its author became known, although my name was on the title page. It was the first of my Works which I had signed, and the only one which, in prudence, I should not have signed. I do not know what motive prompted me to print a dozen title pages myself, omitting the author's name, and insert these in the copies set aside, as was customary, for the Lieutenant of Police and his Agents. No doubt I was actuated by my fear of Desmarolles, the clerk who had stopped my *Lettres d'une Fille à son Père* and *Le Ménage Parisien*, but there was nothing

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**Les Gynographes; Le Quadragenaire; Le Nouvel Abeilard; La Vie de mon Père; La Malédiction Paternelle; Les Contemporaines; La Découverte Australe; La Dernière Aventure d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq Ans; La Prévention nationale; La Paysanne pervertie; Oribeau; L'Anthropographe; Les Françaises; Les Parisiennes; Plays; La Femme infidèle; Nuits de Paris; La Femme séparée; Le Thesmographe; La Semaine nocturne; Les Provinciales* or *L'Année des Dames nationales.*

definite of which I was afraid, and it was mere laziness that made me let Logerot, my compositor, write my letter of announcement (an act of servility suggested to *Meaupeou* by *Letourneur*, secretary at the time to the book trade).

I have forgotten to mention that, during the trouble over *Le Ménage Parisien*, I had gone to Sacy to conclude the sale of my patrimony to my brother Pierre. This was the last time I saw my native country, for up to the present, the 13th of December, 1784-(96), I have not revisited it. . . . To return to *Le Paysan perverti.**

About the 25th of November, three weeks after it had been put on sale, I met Le Jay in the Rue de la Vieille-Bouclerie. "I think," he said, "that your *Paysan* is going to take; it is selling fast!" My natural reaction should have been one of joy: but fear gripped my heart, and the prospect of emerging from my obscurity distressed me. The book sold rapidly. The good Le Jay, whom Beaumarchais has represented as so simple, was far less so than I; he was astute enough to persuade me to sell him four hundred copies at three livres the copy, for which he paid me in bills while retailing them for cash at six and seven francs each. These bills were paid, but only after having been renewed in such a manner that these copies only brought in at most forty sous apiece. *Esprit*, of the Palais-Royal, sold a prodigious number, and as the edition was nearly exhausted in six weeks, this bookseller offered to reprint it for me. I agreed and he printed a second edition at his own expense, only allowing me two hundred and fifty copies for myself, for which I provided the paper. I prepared this edition in twenty days and it left me utterly exhausted; for not only had I corrected many errors, but I had added nearly twenty letters. Meanwhile a certain *Delaporte* of Toulouse, who is now a printer in Paris, pirated my first edition, and that with so little intelligence that he jumbled up the Preface and the Index together and put them at the end of the first volume. As I was unaware of this forgery, I printed a third edition two years later (1780), which sold slowly, because the provinces were flooded with pirated editions to the number of more than ten, and that swindler Delaporte's edition, which was cheaper than mine, was on sale in Paris. Thus a book which should have put me in easy circumstances brought me in scarcely anything; literary brigandage robbed me of my profit, and furthermore deprived me of the opportunity of perfecting my work by introducing certain valuable corrections suggested by M. de Crébillon the younger and Collé, in connection with the following events.

**Le Paysan perverti*, which happens to be the first book which Restif published under his own name, undoubtedly made a great sensation, and exerted a wide influence, not only in France but also in Germany, though the admiration it aroused was often mixed with horror and repulsion. It is strange that it does not seem to have attracted attention in England, and the forty-two English editions of which Restif used to talk were purely mythical. Even La Harpe, the great academic critic of the day, found redeeming points in the book; Grimm's praise was less alloyed, and Mercier was enthusiastic. To-day Funck-Brentano holds that it alone immortalises Restif's name, while it certainly assures his position as the founder of realism in literature. Its main theme, the contrast between the laborious and pious life of the country and the gay and vicious life of Paris, was one which Restif was by 1775 thoroughly familiar with on both sides. [Ed.]

After *Le Paysan* had made its mark and been reprinted, I published *L'École des Pères*, with such considerable abridgments as were necessitated by the suppression of the fourth volume. Before putting it on sale I sent a letter, as was the custom, to *Albert*, Lieutenant of Police, but instead of having it written for me as in the case of the *Paysan*, I wrote and signed it myself. Two days later I received a note from the clerk Desmarolles summoning me to his office. I went, and he informed me that the sale of *L'École des Pères* had been suspended, and a new secret censor appointed to examine it with the utmost rigour. "Your *Paysan*," he added, "has made enough of a stir! A magistrate has written to me about it, and this is what he says: *It is a reasoned system of philosophy contrived to subvert all religion, all morality, etc.*" This magistrate was the famous *d'Épresmenil*, who, under the impression that the book was by Diderot, was trying to get that philosopher into trouble with the Parliament. . . . Desmarolles treated me with revolting arrogance, making it necessary for me to visit his office seventy-two times. The secret censor was a certain *de Sancy*, said to be the bastard son of Miromesnil, Keeper of the Seals – not that I blame him for that; but I do blame him for his meanness, his crawling toadyism and servile cringing. This despicable fellow kept my book for three months, and had the impertinence to erase passages which had already been approved by his colleague, the censor Marchand, who was his senior and a far better informed man than himself. Finally they decided to disallow my book for publication, and I even conducted *Goupil*, Dhemmery's successor, to the binders to put his seal on the packages. This double-faced police officer exhausted himself in offers of service, the drift of which I understood well enough, while pretending not to, because they were useless to me. He remarked aloud to Lefort, one of his satellites: "The man's a bold fellow."

Between the 16th of February and the 6th of May I was going three or four times a week to Desmarolles's office, and finally by dint of entreaties and bribery I obtained permission to make the erasions indicated by de Sancy. The way in which this servile poltroon had mangled a book which only preached the purest virtue must be seen to be believed, and that merely to add to his own importance. . . . How many like performances have led me to despise my fellow-men! . . . I made the erasions and then went off to thank Desmarolles, as the Koreans give thanks to the Devil for the evil which he has not done them. My bribe conciliated the clerk, who was as cowardly and vile as Goupil. I put the mutilated book on sale; it had cost me dear, and did not sell*; but I was left in peace and felt myself lucky to be so.

I was quit of this business about the 20th of May; and without loss of time and in spite of an intrigue of which I shall be speaking, I started work on my *Gynographes*. This is the third volume of *Idées Singulières*, of which *Le Pornographe* is the first and *La Mimographe* the second. I wrote it without any gusto; my spirit was bowed and I felt discouraged. *Le Paysan* was successful but I did not profit by it. The sales had stopped but only as far as I was concerned; every copy I possessed had been taken from me, and in the meanwhile Delaporte was openly selling his pirated edition. Booksellers of limited vision, the F. A. Quillaux of the trade by whom I was surrounded, told me that my book only sold for the licentious passages; it was not until three years later that I found out what the public really thought of it. I wrote *La Paysanne*, which Nougaret had defiled. I saw no one: without acquaintances, influence or friends, what could I do? Suffer, and wrap myself in the shame with which men covered me.

I was left in peace for about six weeks; but troubles of another kind soon followed on those which had just come to an end. Agnès Lebègue had come to Paris during the business over *L'École des Pères* (or rather over *Le Paysan*), and was detained there by floods together with her pupils, who in the Capital cost her double what she earned; for the woman never could calculate her expenses. After pestering me for money, in spite of her

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*An unexpurgated edition of *L'École des Pères* is now to be had at the bookshop of Citoyen Duchesne the younger, rue des Grands Augustins. This edition is in 12mo as are my other books.

promise that the thousand francs advanced in the previous year would suffice her, she laid me under a final contribution. "I am taking everything away with me," she said to my eldest daughter on leaving. "We must not leave him anything. He works better when he has nothing." Such was this woman, who since has played the part of a suffering and misused wife for the benefit of certain persons. While I was being persecuted she claimed to be working in my interests; but I got no satisfaction as long as she was in Paris, and was always meeting enemies, such as Dhemmery and the Abbé Mercier de Saint-Léger, who overwhelmed me with humiliations, because, to cry herself up, she charged me with real or imaginary misdemeanours. Yet she knew nothing of my more important infidelities: she had never met Louise, she did not know what Nicard or Desirée had been to me, and she had only caught a glimpse of Élise; but she laid infamous things to my charge. I suspected Chéreau de Villefranche of being responsible for this spirit of wicked malice, for she had not displayed it in such a high degree before her reunion with this man; and my conjecture is proved correct by two letters which have fallen into my hands during this year, 1784. They were enclosed in a letter from Desirée, and are dated March 1762. Desirée's note contains just a few words addressed to Mlle Zède Villepois: *"I am returning the letter which you found at my gossip's house; it is not right to pry into other people's correspondence, and I have not read the letters you sent me."* The letter is addressed *To Madame Mauger, Rue Saint-André-des-Arcs, the Colour Merchant, second floor.*

FIRST OF THE TWO ENCLOSED LETTERS

My dear friend, you know what husbands are like; your own has given you enough trouble for that. So lend me your kind help, and allow me to use your apartment to receive a gentleman, to whom I am forced to be kind lest he does *away with himself. He is an Englishman, and this is the story. Living on the second floor of a furnished house opposite my windows and near the Saint-Séverin Fountain is a married couple, and the wife seems to me a rich and well brought up young person. The Englishman used to visit her every day, and they would stare across at me and smile. As you know, the smallpox has not affected my looks at a distance though it has somewhat spoiled them close to, so I rather suspected that they thought me pretty and felt flattered. I assumed a gracious manner, and in time the young lady bowed to me. I asked no better and responded with a deep curtsey; then she curtsied to me and smiled again and I smiled too. A moment later someone knocked. I ran to the door and found a stranger there, or rather M. Chéreau de Villefranche, the young lady's husband. "You will forgive this intrusion, neighbour," he said, "when I tell you that I am calling on behalf of my wife, who is desirous of making your acquaintance." With this he glanced at our furniture. I answered that I was much honoured. "Although we occupy a furnished apartment," he continued, "we are not strangers to the quarter, but tradesmen of this street. My wife is the only daughter of your neighbour, M. Charpentier, but we are at odds with her father. Owing to a lawsuit I relinquished the whole business to him and installed myself thus with his only daughter in full view of the whole quarter. He was furious about this, and tried to shoot me. The young man whom you see so often with us is English; he is a well-informed man and a very agreeable companion. To humiliate my wife's father even more, and enjoy the very refinement of revenge, we let him pass for her gallant." Then M. de Villefranche told me that he had been secretary to the Embassy at Turin, mentioned acquaintances among the quality, and, in a word, bragged a good deal. But I perceived, or thought I perceived, at the back of all this a clever schemer free of all prejudice, who, to indulge himself with less constraint, wanted to make his wife party to his pleasures. I guessed that I had attracted him and his Englishman as well, and that he had come to take soundings and find out whether it would be possible to associate themselves with us.*

At first I thought that, having seen our lodging and furniture, he would be averse from so unprofitable a connection. But on the contrary he only became more pressing. All he did was to insure me against a visit from his wife, on the grounds that she would have to pass through the wine merchant's shop. But, *unknown to him, the Englishman came to see me and revealed the fact that both he and Villefranche were in love with me, asking ingenuously enough which I preferred. I answered that if I were free I should prefer whichever of the two was a bachelor; but that as I was married I could not favour anyone except my husband. "But suppose we paid him?" said the Englishman. Apparently in his country everything is a matter of commerce, and there is no difficulty when money smooths the way. The Englishman, who is called Monsieur Janson, beseeched me to call on Mme de Villefranche, as she ardently desired to see me and would be flattered not to owe my acquaintance to her husband. This argument combined with the lady's civility determined me to satisfy her at once. So I made a toilet, and you know that that is not one of my lesser accomplishments.*

Mme de Villefranche seemed to me an experienced little courtesan, extremely free of all prejudice. After we had chatted for half an hour, she suggested that we should arrange a pleasant life for ourselves while she was free of all cares and encumbrances. Seeing that I was anxious to oblige her in any way, she added that I could have her husband, who needed reinvigorating, and she would come to terms with Sir Janson. I blushed, and she exclaimed: "Why, she is blushing! And when did you leave the provinces?" Apparently her husband is a very consistent philosopher and admits no barriers. "But what about my husband, Madame?" I asked. "Ah, you are right! We will give him my shop girl, Lambertine." I burst out laughing, and then the little lady told me some most curious things! She arranged a dinner party for the following Sunday; my husband and I went, and she found him very attractive. She remarked to Sir Janson with that negligent air affected by our courtesans: "Really now, he has the most appetising lips!" My husband blushed, for since he has worked at the Imprimerie Royale he has gone out little and has grown shy. The lady took possession of him after dinner, and Lambertine, Villefranche, Janson and I were left together. Villefranche gave Lambertine to the Englishman, and they went into another room.

Mme Villefranche, who was with my husband, cried out: "I have found a cavalier. If you do not come back I shall make love to him!" And we heard the sound of kisses. . . . Then we could hear nothing. . . . We left at eight o'clock in the evening.

After we had left my husband wanted to know if the whole business had been *pre-arranged. I amused myself a little at his expense, and he grew vexed. Be so kind, dear friend, as to get your husband to convince him that I spent the afternoon with you after I had left my friends. It will be a good deed, and will put everything straight. Also, if Desirée is having an intrigue with your husband, I will keep you posted in it. To-day, Monday, 1762,*

yours always,

A. L.

THE SECOND LETTER

To the Same

Mauger, my dear friend, you have done marvels! He believes it all! But the most extraordinary thing is that he has had the little lady, and perhaps is still having her! As for me, I have no use for the husband; if I had any taste for gallantry I should prefer the Englishman. The house is a brothel. Villefranche lends his wife to his friend Lafray, as one lends a household chattel. He has lent her to Sir Janson too, and calls it living Spartan fashion. Well and good. He told me yesterday that if a woman has the misfortune to be infected during an intrigue and subsequently to infect her gallant, she must at once infect her husband to save her reputation. That seemed to me cruel, atrocious, but he insisted that it was necessary. He has very broad views! No relation is unlawful to him, from husband and wife to father and daughter; and if you ask him to justify these peculiar morals, he answers: "It was the custom among the ancient Romans. And don't you know that the animals do it?" I suggested that it was degrading our species to make them play the monkey to other animals. He considered this a witty and admirable retort, and repeated it to everyone, as one repeats a baby's first words. He has given me very bad advice concerning my husband since the latter refused to associate with him. He says he is no use for anything, a social nonentity, a machine to be made use of without allowing him any power; and urges me particularly to present him in an unfavourable light to our common acquaintances, "so that," as he says, "if we ever get you into trouble with him everyone will put the wrong on his side." Although this man appears superficial, he is really profoundly astute. His wife is a strange little creature, disdainful and impertinent, yet familiar enough when it is a question of some amusement. I tell you all this in advance because I hope that, with your *beauty, they will ask me who you are the first time you visit me, and tell me to bring you to see them. I have already taken Desirée there twice.*

And in this connection I must leave my own affairs for a moment to speak of yours. If as I hope I manage to introduce you into the Villefranche-Janson circle, we shall have no more need to lie. Now that my husband has withdrawn from it, nothing will be easier than to conceal our association with people who live in a furnished house. Our husbands are at work all the week, and we should really be very lucky if they were only better off. For I warn you that yours is selling his Montmorency property bit by bit, so as to give presents to the fair Desirée. But I think he is wasting his time in spite of that, because his charmer knows him for a braggart directly he has a glass of wine inside him, and this happens every Monday as well as every Sunday, as you know. Mine is discretion itself, and I am very much afraid that that flirt . . . She had better take care! If I discover the least thing, I shall upset that money marriage of hers with M. Roncy. I do not forgive that sort of thing. . . . What you have to do, my dear Mauger, is to look after the purse. Try to get hold of it after the Monday's sousing. I know from a remark that my husband dropped when speaking of him, that the Cerisiers louis are under the big brass andiron in your best room with the Medici picture in it. Take a look next time, if he is drunk enough to lose his memory, and see if you can lay hands on the hoard. He carries his gold with him to the printing works on Mondays and amuses himself by making it clink in his hat; so he will only think he has lost it, or that Himète has stolen it. In any case, before you do anything I will find out whether he has taken it, and let you know.

Goodbye, dear Mauger. Let us keep faith with each other. They believe we are a pair of Vestals – yours would put his hand in the fire for it – and it is good that they should think so. . . . I shall come with Sir Janson to your apartment by and bye. Dismiss Javote! I send you a kiss.

A. L.

Such was the second letter. Villefranche was always a most dangerous man! But that is enough about the business, and although I have not told a quarter of the truth, I have perhaps said too much. Indeed I should have kept a complete silence about all that concerned Agnès Lebègue, had not her conduct paved the way to my eldest daughter's marriage, and had she refrained from making the acquaintance, as she has recently done, of three scamps, Scaturin, Naireson, and Milpourmil of Cherbourg.* Further I protest that I have not written what I have about Agnès Lebègue with any idea of palliating my own misdemeanours which are to follow. These I could suppress or disguise, but I shall describe them as they happened. And they will astonish the reader; for I was now forty-two and should have gained in maturity; yet I showed less wisdom in my affair with Élise than in that with Louise and Thérèse, less even than in those of my earlier Epochs. We shall hear the reasons for this. I am not writing to make myself a hero but to instruct my readers, and especially my young readers, at my own expense.

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*"Scaturin," "Naireson," and "Milpourmil" were in real life Fontanes, Joubert and Marlin; and far from being "scamps" they were three of the most estimable men of Restif's age. Louis de Fontanes (born in 1757), of a good family – his father a devout Protestant, his mother an even more devout Catholic – had a rather unhappy and restless youth, but acquired reputation as a poet and was regarded by Châteaubriand as the last of the old classic school; he became in early life a close friend of Joubert and ended as an imposing figure in the academic world and Grand Master of the University. Joseph Joubert, born in 1754 in Guyenne, is everywhere known as one of the great French moralists and *pensée*-writers (perhaps first introduced to English readers by the famous essay in Matthew Arnold's *Essays in Criticism*). François Marlin, born in 1742, a Burgundian of humble birth like Restif, changed his name to Milran from dislike of an objectionable father; he was a good and sincere man, of no original ability, who became a devoted friend, admirer, and literary imitator of Restif; his long life ended in poverty in 1827. It was in 1783 that Joubert and Fontanes first visited the home of the Restifs. They were attracted by interest in the husband's literary work, but as they came to know the household better, and Restif's temperament, it was to Madame Restif that they were attracted, becoming her sympathetic and congenial friends, though without breaking with Restif. Joubert's affection grew into love, to which it may be that she responded. Restif obtained and published some of his wife's letters, but so manipulated them that it is difficult to gather their original meaning. She was in any case Joubert's first if not last love. He was a man of the highest character, whose life was, it has been said, "a continual search for inner beauty"; he was somewhat of a recluse, not being of robust health, and married late; he finally occupied a high academic post. All these figures are discussed fully and judicially by André Beaunier in his *La Jeunesse de Joubert*, 1918. [Ed.]

I had my *Gynographes* printed by F. A. Quillau, so that I was at the works every day. He had a pretty wife, as we know; but she was not the attraction. Let us return to where I broke off.

At the same time that I was printing *Les Gynographes*, a certain Liègois named *Mourant*, formerly a journeyman printer, now a bookseller and moreover a dishonest man, was having Mme la Présidente *d'Ormoy's Les Aventures de la Jeune Émilie* printed at Quillau's at his own expense. We were intimately acquainted without being friends. This man had a mistress to dispose of, to whom he wanted to introduce me. It was Mme Lacroix opposite, the heroine of one of the *Contemporaines.*

This woman was very wanton. I never once visited her without being treated to some revolting or too luscious indecency. If she asked me to put wood on the fire, she always pulled up her skirts above the knee so that I could see her *concha Veneris*, which she knew to be a very pretty one. At other times she would produce some bawdy book and look at the illustrations with me, taking pleasure in discoursing upon them; and I was weak enough to spare her by pretending to have as little shame as herself. The phrases she made use of had to be heard to be believed! And her methods of seduction were such that one was forced to succumb, for she caught you to her like another Cleopatra, and made two or three movements so salacious that she would have drawn a saint. One day, in 1773, when she was showing me the illustrations of *L'Académie des Dames*, she seized me by the breeches so that my button flew open and, slipping on to her back, crossed her legs over my loins, adjusting herself so perfectly that I was engaged before I had time to think. Two or three vigorous jerks finished the business; the crisis came, and I had mingled myself with Lacroix without either intention or desire. I was already the father of her daughter, or so she assured me, but as she was having young F. at the time, and a little while after had six others (D***, D***-Journal, Lajeunesse her lacquey, young *François* her jockey, one of the Duc d'*Aiguillon's* secretaries, and a man belonging to the Police), I really cannot be certain. It was the freedom of her behaviour with me that made her so furious when, in 1780, she thought she recognised herself in the 167th *Contemporaine*; in fact, meeting me one day in the Rue de la Parcheminerie, she flew at me as though she were going to box my ears. However, I looked her in the face with a smile, and she passed on without striking me. Let us finish with this woman.

Madame Lacroix and her husband were on very intimate terms with the bookseller D.V.L.,* formerly Mlle Talon's fancy man. Mme D*** had the same morals as Mme Lacroix; one day an apprentice, called Fouquet, caught her in full swing with one of the clerks of the Director for Agriculture. The man tipped the boy, and Mme D*** remarked: "One should knock before entering a room, my friend." After he had grown up this same Fouquet saw the four L*** and D*** children, boys and girls, profiting by their mothers' example. One day young D***, aged fourteen, said to Mlle L***: "I must show you how it is done." And he showed her as far as he was able, while young L***, aged fifteen, did as much for Mlle D***. Why are not these unworthy mothers more careful? The wretches teach their children vice before they have the power to practise it, and the poor young people are surfeited with love without ever having tasted it, and can never thirst for the joys of marriage! . . . "You show us vice too nakedly!" I! I set puritanism at defiance in order to unmask vice and instruct parents.

Mme L*** died in 1784, and most miserably. Her chambermaid, who

*Duval. [Ed.]

had a taste for intrigue, procured a rich American for her, who wanted (so he said) to possess an honest woman in Paris before returning to his country; and was prepared to pay a thousand louis for the mother of a family in a fair position. Hearing about this windfall, the chambermaid persuaded her mistress to seize it; and one of Mme L***'s gallants, the attorney D***, was the unconscious means of conveying the necessary information to the American. The latter was enchanted, and brought his thousand louis together with a hundred for the chambermaid. He slept with the lady in a perfumed bed, and slipping out at three o'clock in the morning through a door by the bed-head, was seen by Taillepied, the pressman (brother of the clockmaker in the *Marché Palu*), and two other workmen who, taking him for a robber, chased him to his carriage. . . . Mme L*** was very happy next day counting up her thousand louis! But alas, the American had caught the yaws from one of his negresses, and passed on a thorough dose of it to the honest woman whom he paid so well! Mme Lacroix became aware of her misfortune at the end of a fortnight. Her faithful servant drove the eruption inwards and brought the invalid to death's door. She spent a thousand louis and more on drugs, and ended by dying . . . of the itch. . . . No doubt her brother-in-law, the barrister G–no, knew the whole story, for, speaking of the maidservant, he said: "It was that scamp who killed my sister!" Such is the fate of harlots! . . .

One day, when Mourant and I were chatting on the landing, we heard a silvery voice calling: *"Monsieur Lajeunesse!"* This M. Lajeunesse, Mme L***'s servant, was a very handsome fellow, and his mistress had taught him to dress the hair, so that he had the honour of daily handling some very pretty heads. The girls calling him (for there were two of them) were

Virginie, reputed to be the daughter of François, a bankrupt baker of the Faubourg Germain, and a beautiful brunette, by profession a hairdresser and natural daughter of a clockmaker who had parted with her. Virginie, a tall, charming-looking blonde always tastefully dressed, had been attracting my attention for the last two years. She lived next door to the house in which I was lodging, and I greatly desired her acquaintance. On hearing voices, Mourant leaned over the banisters and saw the two girls pass through the double doors leading to the little staircase up to the room of Lajeunesse. "That is *Virginie* and her friend *Dartois*," he said. "They have gone in to Lajeunesse. Let us go down and lock them in from outside." Whatever his age, a man always retains a streak of the monkey in him for mischief. We went downstairs and shot the outer bolt, which was only used to prevent the door from banging against the staircase. Then, putting our hands through a spy hole, we reached for the hem of a skirt, to see if we could recognise which was which by their clothes. Mourant caught hold of Virginie's, and I recognised it at once. Satisfied with having shut them in, we went upstairs again, but we were scarcely on the second floor before they burst the bolt and fled. Mourant was on the alert; he ran after them, caught them up and spoke to them; and then came back to report the conversation. M. Lajeunesse had invited them to have a meal with him during the absence of his mistress (who always spent the whole summer in the suburb of *Saint-Jacques*, to enjoy the greater freedom of a small house), and this was the third time the girls had been thus entertained by him. Mourant had suggested an excursion to the Bois de Boulogne for the following Monday, the 26th of June, and they had joyfully accepted. He urged me to complete the party, and curiosity, or rather a desire to make the acquaintance of my tall neighbour, prompted me to accept. It can be imagined with what impatience I awaited Monday! However, it came at last. At midday, the hour agreed upon, Mourant was in front of Notre-Dame, where he was joined by two young women, my blonde and another who had come instead of dark Dartois. They got into a carriage, I passed as though by chance, and Mourant hailed me. Virginie blushed when she saw me, mistaking me, as she whispered afterwards, for M. *Narquois* of *La Chercheuse d'Esprit.* We drove off, and conversation grew lively in the carriage. We got down at the Chaillot gate, and went on foot to *Passy*, where we ordered dinner at a tavern. While it was preparing we drank a glass of wine, and explored the garden of *Les Nouvelles-Eaux*, running up and down the paths and in and out of green-shaded arbours. Mourant was always trying to get Virginie away from us, but he ruined his prospects by a chance remark: he told her that I was the author of *Le Paysan perverti.* Although I was her neighbour, the pretty blonde only knew me by sight, and came up at once to compliment me. She began to despise Mourant, and though he would not give her up because, as it was his party, he thought he had the right to first choice, his plans did not succeed as he had expected.*

There were a thousand pretty things about Virginie to delight me. She was eighteen or nineteen years old, having been born in 1757 or 58. I knew her scarcely better than she knew me and, as she was always well dressed, had assumed that she belonged to well-to-do folk, and was the niece of the M. *Praiter* with whom she and her mother lodged. Consequently I had expressed surprise to Mourant that a girl of her class should be intimate enough with a valet to accept his invitation to a meal in the absence of his employer; and now Mourant, an unmannerly fellow as are all Liègois,

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*For the real reason see the 88th *Nationale*, and glance through the play entitled *Virginie* in the *Drame de la Vie*, pp. 724-776.

remonstrated crudely with Virginie on this very matter in my presence. She blushed; but the widow, an impudent brunette whom I found as unpleasing as the young blonde was charming, retorted: "You need not be so scornful of Lajeunesse! He can have something that you want, and most certainly will not get, whenever he likes!" Virginie made her an imperceptible sign to hold her tongue. "Faith, if he says it, I can say it too!" answered the widow. However, she did not pursue the subject, and refused to answer Mourant's incessant questions.

Directly she had the opportunity, Virginie came to walk beside me, but the widow told her so seriously that she should keep to the man who had invited her in the first place, a view which Mourant evidently shared, that in courtesy I had to yield. So I offered my hand to the widow, but though Virginie walked ahead of us, she was constantly turning round to join in our conversation. The widow was well enough, but she lost too much by comparison to engage my attention pleasantly. At last it was time to eat and we hurried back to dinner, urged by hunger and good spirits, for we had promised ourselves a delicious meal together.

And in fact, assisted by a few glasses of passable wine, the first course put the ladies into an excellent humour; they became expansive, and Virginie let fall a host of licentious phrases which seemed too coarse for her pretty scarlet lips. But I was well aware that Parisian girls are given to verbal freedoms. Mourant, who affected a cloak-and-sword foppery, began to discuss maidenheads. "They went long ago," said the widow. "And yours?" asked the bookseller. "Ah," said Virginie, casting her eyes to heaven with a smile and a sigh, "what can one do against violence?" This remark surprised me, though I should have known, with my experience, that a girl who goes on an excursion to the Bois de Boulogne with two men who are almost strangers to her was not likely to be strictly virtuous. . . . We went on eating and drinking. . . . The ladies, and especially the widow, were very hungry; and though Virginie ate daintily, she admitted that she had never eaten with such good appetite. Mourant poured out bumpers, but in spite of his efforts the pretty blonde mixed water with the wine; the widow drank hers neat and seemed to carry it extremely well. We had strawberries for dessert, which Mourant mixed with wine and plenty of sugar. Virginie, who loved strawberries, grew almost drunk upon the wine which covered them, and Mourant seized this moment to inveigle her into an adjoining room. She would certainly have succumbed, although she offered some resistance; but the widow threw one glance at me and, seeing that I was as cold as ice, rose abruptly and ran to her friend's assistance. Mourant could have strangled her, and reproached me privately for not having detained her. "How could I help it?" I answered. "She is a dog in the manger." Virginie was very shamefaced with me after this assault, and I think she made up her mind carefully to avoid being alone with me.

When we rose from table we had the remains of our meal put aside for supper, and then went into the Bois de Boulogne. Mourant was a bully and forced Virginie to take his arm very much as his professional counterparts make the girls dependent on them toe the line; and, from that moment, jealousy decided me to thwart his plans. This was easily arranged; there was no need to do more than show indifference to the widow (if it had been Dartois things would have gone differently, for she attracted me as much as did Virginie) to be certain that she would not allow her companion to get more petting than she did. And this happened. Mourant signalled to me in vain to keep the widow busy; I took good care to ignore his glances, and he did not get one moment alone with Virginie. After wandering through the wood, with most agreeable pauses for repose, we returned at day-fall to finish our dinner. Then we got into a carriage which, by good luck, was returning empty to Paris, and left our fair companions at their homes, safe and sound and indubitably "intact."

Next day Mourant tried to repair what he described as his "greenness" of the day before. He saw Virginie at her door and made an assignation with her in my apartment. He told me the good news on my arrival at the printing works, and though I had no taste for the scheme, I did not let this appear. More cunning and resourceful in affairs of gallantry than he, I wrote a line to Virginie on leaving him and, watching my chance, slipped the note into her hand and awaited the result. My note made an assignation with her on the water's edge for two o'clock, and she did not fail me.

Her appointment with Mourant was for three o'clock, and at two o'clock Mourant would be having dinner with his wife, a pretty young brunette, the daughter of a well-known locksmith in the Rue Saint-Victor. I knew this. Directly they had finished, he stood sentry at the printer's staircase window to watch for his blonde. . . . Let us leave him to his impatience.

Virginie appeared just as I was beginning to fear Mourant's vigilance. Directly I saw her approaching, the Loves and Graces attendant on her steps, I flew to meet her. "Come away quickly," I said, taking her towards the Porte Saint-Bernard, "or Mourant may catch sight of us." She needed no pressing, and we walked rapidly. I showed myself in a different light from the person she had met the day before; I paid her compliments certainly and said pretty things to her, but I let none but honourable sentiments escape me; I gave her good advice and counselled her to see no more of the widow, as she would only do her harm.

Conversing thus we reached the timber yards. A woman came out of these who greeted Virginie with every appearance of familiar intimacy. As I was looking at her, I recognised her for a Mme Decan, whom I had possessed in 1770 or 1771 after my illness, and whom I had later seen as a bawd at the corner of the Rue des Poulies, since when she pretended not to remember me and behaved as though she did not know me. She talked privately to Virginie for more than five minutes. After she had gone, I said to my companion: "I know that woman." Virginie neither blushed nor showed the least sign of embarrassment. She only said: "She sells second-hand clothes." I was reassured, thinking: "She might well sell second-hand clothes now, and Virginie only know her in this connection." We went on walking until we reached that crapulous wine garden *La Maison Blanche*; here we chose our Inn and a room to dine in. I can take this credit to myself, that, left alone with a girl I had long and ardently desired, I behaved with the greatest self-control. My conversation was entirely directed to the understanding of her position, and this she in part revealed to me, whereby I discovered that, far from being in easy circumstances, she was the unfortunate daughter of ruined parents. She told me that her mother, a very pretty woman known in the Faubourg Saint-Germain as the Fair Bakeress, was the daughter of a wax merchant. She had received a good education, and a dowry of thirty thousand francs on marriage. She had been bestowed on Virginie's father because he had at least double that amount and, as his shop was well known, an established business into the bargain. Her parents had argued: "It is not a brilliant position, but it is solid. With what they have in hand they will be able to give their children a hundred thousand francs some day." "But," continued Virginie, "my mother was so pretty and so much courted by the Quality, that my father grew jealous and took to drink and, worse, to gambling. In six years he had disposed of more than ninety thousand francs. Finding he could no longer pay his way, he went in search of my mother one day and found her in her room dressing to go out to the theatre. 'Madame,' he said, 'you have amused yourself, and so have I. I have no money, but I hope you will provide me with some. Such women as you earn money so agreeably that they should not mind parting with it.' My mother assured him that she had none. 'Then what have you done with what you got out of your . . .?' 'Husband, what a word. . . . I have always been well behaved, and never . . .' ' 'Sblood!' exclaimed my father. 'She has played the whore and asked no money for it! Zounds, why did you not tell me! I would have thrown your gallants out of the window, and not spent all my property! We have nothing left: I owe the dealers more than I am worth. Sell all those trinkets to pay them and keep one dress to cover your devil of a . . . I shall liquidate what is left and find a master to work for. You are pretty; look after yourself.' Without delay he seized everything that belonged to my mother, converted it into money, paid his debts, and took a place in a bakery at the top of the *Rue des Francs-Bourgeois*, where he is still working. I was eight at the time, and as my mother did not know what to do with me, she put me with a feather dresser in the Rue Dauphine and went to Hamburg with a foreign lady as governess to some young girls. She was away six years, and I grew up. The feather dresser had taken me out of charity and I was very badly treated. One day I caught sight of one of my mother's old friends, a lawyer named Bonthoux, so I ran after him to ask him if he could not do something for me. He stared at me for a few moments, and then said:

'Gladly. Be ready to come away with me to-morrow evening.' He fetched me at eight o'clock, and took me to a little room in the Rue de la *Serpente*. There, by dint of promises and threats, he got . . . what he wanted of me; and thereafter gave me twelve francs a week and my rent; also he set me up in dresses and under-linen, and he used to visit me every day. He only deserted me a fortnight ago, and that was why I joined the party with you and Mourant. That is my whole story, save that my mother fell in love with a man in Hamburg, who took her thence, spent everything she had, and then deserted her; so that now she lives with me and is compelled to see me doing . . . what I do."

Her narrative told me enough. I suggested that she should apprentice herself to millinery, and she seemed to accept the proposal with gratitude. We chose a certain Mme *Semen*, a milliner of the *Quai des Augustins*, and having arranged matters thus, we left the Inn. But it was a glorious day: the sun's rays were tempered by clouds and the fields were bright with flowers; so Virginie suggested that we should walk to Bicêtre. Now I had never revisited Bicêtre since I left it that November in 1747, so the suggestion appealed to me. We walked through the corn, following little tortuous and delightful paths, most pleasant for a ramble. My thoughts were back in the years of my youth: I recalled Duprat, and still more vividly that virtuous Molinist, Bonnefoi; and under the suave influence of these memories, my conversation became more affectionate and innocent. I talked to Virginie as though she were my daughter, and perhaps she herself forgot for the moment what she was, for she spoke with a candid simplicity that was well suited to her sweet voice and was charming! My heart quickened as we entered Bicêtre, and I fell silent. Thirty years were wiped out, and I was back on the day when I had left that place with the

Abbé Thomas and M. Maurice. I saw my dear Fayel and J.-B. Poquet again and all my old schoolfellows; I almost forgot Virginie, and could scarce restrain my tears. "Do you know anyone here?" "I used to live here." "Live!" "Yes, when I was about eleven or twelve." "Ah! Then you were in the Reformatory?" "No, I was one of the choir boys. My brother was the master." "Oh, then we must call on them! They will be delighted to see an old friend again." "Yes, a lot of choir boys of forty-two years old!" "Of course! Lud, how stupid I am!" She spoke as though rallying me about my age, yet she did it with such grace and tenderness that I took the greatest pleasure in her quizzing.*

Why is it that light women are more seductive and more loveable than honest ones? Because like the Greek courtesans, who had special mistresses in the graces of love, they have studied the art of pleasing. Not one of the fools who traduce my *Contemporaines* suspects the philosophic purpose underlying nearly all the stories, which is to suggest ways whereby honest women can attract and hold love.† I would like to see "initiations" established, such as were practised by the ancients. These were of two kinds, one for the men and one for the women. In the former, the follies and absurdities of the dominant religion were exposed, and a form of deism (which some claim was atheism) taught instead. Jupiter, his loves and sons, Phœbus driving the chariot of the sun were ridiculed, and a sound physical philosophy expounded which, owing to the timid cowardice of fools and the fear of enlightening the populace, could not be preached in public. For we must not think that the governments believed

*You already know Virginie, Reader, from *Le Quarantenaire* and *La Malédiction Paternelle.* She is still living with her mother. She played in Comedy for *Viennet,* a well-known Abbé, in the *Rue Taranne,* and afterwards at the *Théâtre de la Butte, Mont-Parnasse.*

†See *Les Parisiens,* which was written after *Les Contemporaines.*

in religion; they only supported it for the guidance of the foolish masses. To think otherwise would be a gratuitous insult to the human race. . . . But whither am I wandering? Female initiations or Mysteries were entirely different from those of the male. Women of all ages met in private conclave, and the elder ones or matrons expounded the so-called theory of the Bountiful Goddess to young married women. They taught them the pretty ways which captivate a man, how to keep themselves scrupulously clean and dress seductively: the art of half veiling the breast, of walking with voluptuous grace, of a deportment that excites desire. They went further and expounded the whole art of venery: of lascivious kisses and amorous handling, of how to move during the act so as to augment voluptuous pleasure; how to contract, and to perform *the pendulum of Venus*, etc. That is why men were forbidden under pain of death to enter the hall where these Mysteries were celebrated. Their presence would have profaned them; that is to say, if the other sex had known the subject-matter of the lessons taught, the value of these would have been nullified. When the Bacchantes celebrated the Mysteries of their god, they were initiated at the same time into those of the Bountiful Goddess, or the Divine Mother, or *Dea Fututrix*, as the Romans called her. Their erotic frenzy, which came near to rending their victims in pieces, was however only feigned; its object was to frighten away the reckless and to avenge those wives who were cruelly treated by their husbands. . . . Wives were subject to their husbands all their lives; but they had the Bacchanalia to avenge them on a tyrant. . . . Nowadays the happiness of the human race is left to chance. As with the animals, woman's experience is individual, and what women with the gift of pleasing could teach the others dies with them. Only prostitutes make a superficial study of this art, but even with them it is not general, for bawds only foster those who have a natural aptitude, abandoning the others to men of brutal lusts. But in any case the lessons of a bawd are as harmful as those of the estimable Greek and Roman matrons were admirable and excellent. The former only tend to debauchery and the exhausting of the client's purse and powers; the object of the latter was to solidify the marriage bond and to affirm attachment by mutual enjoyment. Christianity abolished the Mysteries as infamous, and this might well be regarded as one of the wrongs it did the human race. It was the work of unenlightened men whose zeal had turned to bitterness, of dangerous puritans who were the natural enemies of marriage in itself. Of these there were many enough among the early Christians, just as nowadays we have the Jansenists – an execrable sect, hypocrites or fanatics all, and therefore most dangerous. . . . But we were speaking of Virginie.

My emotion grew as we crossed the various courts. Virginie's gaiety dropped from her, and I realised that she had a sympathetic heart; tears came to her eyes for the misery which surrounded her. We went into the church, and I fell upon my knees before the altar to the Virgin where, with my fellow choristers, I used to chant Litanies each Saturday. I remembered that Fayel and Poquet were our choir leaders, and addressed them in sad and tender retrospect! . . . Virginie, imitative as are all women, knelt beside me and prayed with her whole heart; and perhaps the prayers of this young Samaritan were more earnest at this moment than those of any recluse. She interrupted herself to ask: "What altar is this?" "It is to the Virgin." On this she closed her eyes again, and tears flowed down her cheeks as she prayed more fervently than ever. When we rose, I went to the Choir and kissed the place that used to be mine. Virginie stared at me: "What are you doing?" "My child, thirty years ago I used to sit there."

"Thirty years!" she said, leaning softly on my shoulder. A smile brightened her still wet eyes: "I have never been so happy with anyone as I am with you! Dear *Papa*, you are not at all like the other men I have known!"

We left the church and, crossing the great Court, went upstairs to the choristers' dormitory. I had some difficulty in remembering the way, and asked one of *God's poor* to be my guide. When we reached the door, I began to reflect that after all I had no reason save curiosity for disturbing the children at their work; however, our guide had already opened it and announced us. On entering I saw a few ill-disciplined children, wandering about among the tables which in my days had been well furnished with books and papers and the tools of various arts. The master was standing by the chimney piece, and I embraced him, saying: "Monsieur, I salute you. I used to be a pupil in this classroom, and it is with great emotion that I see it again." This was enough to introduce me, and the children, to the number of seven or eight (there were fifty-two in my day), surrounded me tumultuously, and I saluted them as my dear schoolfellows and embraced them. They asked my name. I told it. Tradition had preserved my brother's memory, and they exclaimed: "You used to be the master here!" "No, dear friends. When my brother was master here, I was only a scholar; I am no more than an old schoolfellow of yours." The master welcomed me warmly, and Virginie too. He took us to his room and, at my request, allowed us to visit the little infirmary. Tears ran down my cheeks at the sight of the statue of the Child Jesus holding out his arms, with the inscription underneath: *Venite ad me, Filii mei, et timorem Domini docebo vos*. I remembered how deeply this statue had affected me, when I was languishing like some young and tender flower which has been transplanted. I explained the inscription and the statue to Virginie in touching phrases; and the poor child, who was good by nature, shed the fairest tears I have ever seen in my life. "How fortunate you are, Monsieur," said the master, who took her for my daughter, "to have so beautiful and sensitive a child!" I pressed Virginie's hand to my heart without answering. We left to the great regret of both the master and the boys. At the door I met one of the resident priests on his way to the choristers. I did not recognise him; but they must have told him who I was on entering, for the door was flung open and in a moment the priest was in my arms. "Ah, brother Augustin!" he exclaimed. "I am Brother Paterne." I knew him well enough then, and was overjoyed to meet an old schoolfellow. He came with us and showed us over the Institution. He was a native of Orleans.

First of all he took us to see the wells; the machinery was clumsy and very faulty, but they were displayed as a curiosity: I could remember being shown them with my revered father. . . . Everything in the place excited my emotions. Virginie was full of curiosity, and her artless surprise was so sweetly expressed that I fell genuinely in love with her, in spite of all I knew and in spite of my resolutions, my experience and my age. Paterne was delighted with her, and kept repeating: "How much better to be the father of such a charming creature than to have adopted a solitary life such as mine!" As my daughter Agnès was as pretty as Virginie and I loved her tenderly, I accepted his congratulations without scruple, and thought to myself: "On the whole, he is right. . . ."

After the wells we visited the place called *La Force*. I shuddered. First we went through the mad-house. Some of the inmates were very quiet and had invented various curiosities which they displayed to attract alms. Great God, what a fate! Condemned to an imprisonment which can only aggravate their ill and deserted by all nature, these poor wretches are lower than the beasts; on the least sign of any emotion, they are beaten mercilessly and as though they had lost all power to feel, by barbarous keepers who are deaf to their complaints, who laugh at them. . . . It is a frightful fate! Virginie emptied her purse in this sad abode. . . . Then we passed in front of the gate of La Force where fraudulent spies are confined. As every spy is a blackguard, these prisoners are not spared; it is the intention that they should die, or be so thoroughly frightened that once they are let out they will never again give cause for complaint. This loathsome place is the very picture of Tartarus itself. Heaped one upon the other, screaming and swearing, devoured by vermin, and making such a horrible noise that in an instant's pause before their barred door we were stunned by it, their misery is equal to their villainy; they do not get a moment's peace. The pestiferous air they breathe gives them a thousand different diseases; the atmosphere is vitiated by their breath, and seems to attack the soul as well as the body, infecting it also with corruption.

Then we turned our feet towards the cells, and this was a new scene of horror. We saw an enormous building of hewn stone, composed of more than six storeys, since these were low in height, and divided into little barred cells nine feet long by six wide. And human beings are shut up in these as if there were no space left on the earth! What Busiris conceived this form of punishment? Those in the lower cells suffered from the damp, and those in the upper ones were no better off, for their bars prevented them from seeing into the courtyard. An infernal malice had contrived an angle to the building so that a part of it gave upon a place into which no one ever penetrated. Most of the poor wretches in these cells have little mirrors whereby they can see the people who come into the courtyard. I noticed with a feeling of horror that all the cells were occupied, so that fifty mirrors were pointed at us. Virginie looked charming, and I was gladdened by the thought that the sight of her would for a moment suspend the sufferings of these poor men. They could talk to each other, by shouting at the tops of their voices (that at least was a consolation of which a futile and secret barbarity had not deprived them. In the horrible Bastille even this feeble solace is denied! O God, can either imprisoners or the imprisoned be human? . . .). Some of them made remarks which showed how greatly my companion excited their admiration; others . . . bellowed with desire . . . and then I wondered whether the sight of Virginie might not only increase their sufferings. . . .

Another affecting sight awaited us. . . . We went into the Chapel and Paterne showed us the place from which the prisoners, roughly ten by ten, were allowed to hear Mass. An idea struck me; what a cry of anguish must rise to God from that assemblage of unfortunate creatures! And what vengeance this cry should call down upon their oppressors, if there is a God who recompenses and avenges! Most frightful oaths rose to our ears through an opening in the stone floor of the Chapel. Paterne told us that they came from the butcher who had hurled a flaming firebrand at Sartine's stomach, when the latter threatened to have him shut up in the Reformatory and flogged. (This man remained for twenty-seven years in the cells at Bicêtre, and was only released with the Revolution.)

While we were in the Chapel an old man entered it with a tall lad. Virginie was struck by his appearance, and he was struck by hers; the two young people were attracted to each other, and this did not wound me. But the tender interest he awakened in her cost him dear; for as we were leaving the Chapel, two Guards came between the father and son, and the old man hastened away. "Father, you are not betraying me?" exclaimed the lad, stretching out his arms. But no one listened to him!

"Come," said Virginie, pale and trembling, "let us strangle that wicked father!" We overtook the old man before he had left the courtyard. "Old monster!" exclaimed Virginie. "Mademoiselle," answered the old man, "I am a good father and am only trying to save my son! A passion for gambling has got hold of him, and nothing can overcome it; he will lose all sense of duty, and even his integrity. . . . I was told this, I convinced myself of it by personal observation and wanted to avert his ruin without publicity. . . . Therefore, on the pretext of visiting a relative, I brought him here; no one in the world will know where he is, so that his honour will not suffer; but his captivity, for this very reason, will be severe. . . . He is to have a cell in the back court. . . ." "O God," exclaimed Virginie, weeping. "Could you not cure him by tenderness?" "No! He withstood his mother's and his sister's tears. His sister is about your age and as beautiful as you, and she loves him tenderly!" "You have done wisely," said Paterne. "I am a resident priest here, and if you wish it I will go from time to time and administer consolation." The father threw his arms about his neck with tears in his eyes, and this at once reconciled Virginie to him. . . .

The old man left, and we returned to the prisoners. The young man was already installed in the first cell of the ground floor on the back court, and Paterne had the door opened for us. His face held excellent promise. His father had sent a white cat to the prison of which he was very fond, and it had just been given him. The animal came out directly it saw Virginie and caressed her, taking her no doubt for its master's sister. She took it up and kissed it. Then the young man called it to him and pressed his lips to the place which Virginie had kissed. She saw his action and blushed, and Paterne went at once to offer consolation to the prisoner. Virginie innocently started to approach him, but the Guard raised his musket to stop her, and she was frightened. He was but a watch dog and he smiled, for who could look at Virginie harshly? "You cannot come nearer!" he said. "Why?" "Those are my orders." "Then your orders are wrong. It is because you do not want innocence to be made manifest! Fie, that is wicked!" The Guard advanced as though to push her away, and she uttered a piercing scream; then Paterne and I took her between us and led her to the outer courtyard, where we helped her to recover by buying her some trifles made by the prisoners out of painted straw. We were told that the men who sold them had been condemned to death and had their sentence commuted to a life imprisonment; therefore, having no hope of freedom, they tried to mitigate their lot by making such things and by trafficking, not only in their own work, but in that of the more isolated prisoners shut away in the upper storeys.

At last we left, my spirit permeated with melancholy. Paterne took us back to his room and gave us some light refreshment. I could take nothing but a glass of wine and water, but Virginie ate a few strawberries. Paterne asked for my address in Paris, I embraced him and we departed.

Paterne left us at about fifty paces from the Institution, and then Virginie put her arm about my neck, saying: "I shall never forget you. I have been quite different to-day with you than with anybody else. Yes, truly; I am another person and one I never would have believed I had it in me to be! . . . Oh, I shall never see that widow again! My dear Dartois shall be my only friend!" So we went home good friends; the sun was setting and the air was pure and fresh. We re-entered by the Porte *Saint-Marceau*, and Virginie began to walk quickly directly we were within the town. At the foot of the *Montagne Sainte-Geneviève* she relinquished my arm, and her manner became troubled, aloof and cold. I was surprised at the change, but it was a mystery I could not fathom at the time. . . . Without a secret and insurmountable obstacle of which I was unaware at the time, I might have been happy with Virginie, and she with me, perhaps, in spite of my age. . . . (Do not be offended, O Louise and Thérèse! She was your sister!) But what am I saying? No, I could not have been happy. I had a wife and two daughters, one of whom was in the country with her mother; only through these three creatures could I be happy, and all three seemed equally resolute against it! I was very fond of my daughter Agnès, but she was hard in her ways, and this apparent hardness was certainly my greatest misfortune at this period. . . .

Virginie asked me not to accompany her as far as the *Rue du Fouarre*, where she lived; she promised to dine with me on the following Friday, and I went home by the Rue de Bièvre.

I do not think that I have ever been what could be termed a vicious man; despite my ardent passions I find more pleasure in good, generous and decent behaviour than in those voluptuous pleasures for which Nature has so much disposed me. I congratulated myself on my conduct with Virginie; but I was afraid of Mourant and I was jealous of the lacquey Lajeunesse. The latter especially turned my thoughts to lustful pleasures through the jealousy he inspired. Had it not been for the shadow that these two men cast on Virginie I should have known what to do; I should have worshipped her and striven to make an honest woman of her, as I had of Zéphire, with whom I delighted to compare her. . . . Ah, if I had been the only one!

On Friday Virginie came to dinner with me, and we behaved as real friends. I gave her a louis to pay for the two weeks since Bonthoux had left her, for (so she said) the latter no longer visited her. Saturday was S. Peter's Day.

I had not seen Mourant since my pleasant excursion with Virginie, and when I met him at the printer's I was much amused by his reproaches. He had spent most of the afternoon watching for Virginie. He had come to my lodging, expecting to find her there, and had sat down on the stairs, never thinking for a moment that she had gone out. Later he made enquiries of my landlady, Mme Debée, and of her fourteen-year-old daughter Sara; he described Virginie, but they had never seen her. I told him nothing about my excursion with the pretty blonde, and was maintaining this modest silence, when Virginie happened to pass. She was wearing a dress of white printed muslin, which she set off to admiration. She was charming; neither Mourant nor I had ever seen her look so pretty. We were at the window, and Lajeunesse was at the door. He greeted her and, not seeing us, she stopped to speak to him. "Aha!" he said. "I know all about you! So you went for a walk with our philosopher on Thursday?" "How did you know?" "He told me." "That's not true." "Anyway, I know. You went through the Porte Saint-Bernard, and La Decan saw you." And he described some of our experiences in Bicêtre. "So Dartois told you all that? Well, I don't care – not for either of you." And she ran off lightly. "All right, all right!" shouted Lajeunesse. "I shall tell the philosopher . . . what happened . . . the day of the see-saws. . . . You know what I mean!" Virginie did not hear him. Mourant wanted to run after her, but I detained him for a moment, and Virginie disappeared from sight. Then I left him with Lajeunesse, who was telling him a long story, and, chancing to take the Rue de la Bûcherie, caught sight of Virginie opposite the Rue Saint-Julien-le-Pauvre, passing through the Petit Châtelet. I quickened my pace and followed her at a distance. She went into the Hôtel-Dieu, and I was tempted to follow her, deeply affected by the thought that this sensitive and generous creature was certainly going to comfort some poor invalid. My imagination had already exalted Virginie, the light woman, above her more honest sisters, when I saw her issue forth, gay and smiling, between two young carabineers, the shorter of whom was a charming dark-skinned lad. Keeping out of sight, I followed them down the Rue Notre-Dame, the Petit Châtelet, the Rues du Petit-Pont and Saint-Jacques, until they disappeared into the grocer Machy's passage-way opposite the *Rue Mathurins.* I did not then know that I could have seen what happened after from the stairway, so I turned homewards sad and thoughtful. . . . Virginie had made a deep impression on me; but I suspected that she was not only kept, but had some vile parasite of a fancy man as well. I was painfully sensible of the weakness of jealousy.

On my return to the printer's curiosity led me to interrogate Lajeunesse. The fellow told me that the smaller of the two carabineers was Virginie's lover, and that he had lived in the same furnished house as herself before the arrival of Mme François. Continuing, Lajeunesse described the favours he himself had enjoyed, quoting among others an occasion when I had myself seen him from Mourant's windows (which were opposite those of Mme Quillau) bantering and "see-sawing" very freely with two girls, of whom one was Virginie and the other young Dartois. (This brunette, Dartois, is well enough to look at still at fifty years of age, September 15th, 1796.) These revelations removed all the delicacy of my feelings for Virginie; she became no more to me than a girl accustomed to give herself, one whom it would be ridiculous to respect after she had bestowed her favours on a little carabineer, a lacquey, and so forth. I remembered the woman at the Porte Saint-Bernard, and had no doubt but that Virginie had been party to her "gatherings." I no longer thought of her as another Zéphire, but as a lost woman, and was undainty enough to long to satisfy my lust upon her. . . . Yet I was wrong in my estimate of Virginie: she had an excellent disposition and, if I had addressed the business with any skill, I could have cut a most precious diamond. But had I time for this, or fortune? I was just emerging from grievous difficulties, and though my spirit, so long eclipsed, was beginning to recover a little spring, it had not its former energy. I have proved in myself that the highest virtue is to be strong in misfortune:

*Fortiter ille facit, qui miser esse potest.**

I was weak, disheartened, and greedy for pleasure; I was forty, that is to say, I had reached an age when love is not necessary to possession (and this surely is the greatest tragedy of middle age); I was losing the delicate sensibilities which so often preserve the morals of young men of good parentage.

Such was my mood when Virginie came to dinner with me next day, Sunday. I had meant to ask her certain questions and to take any chance that offered; but at first sight of her my lips were closed to everything save what concerned my passion. All her artlessness returned in my company; I forgot what I had heard and followed the impulse of my heart, which dictated only the tenderest phrases. I paid for my pleasures in advance by giving her the fee for her apprenticeship to Mme Semen, and I obtained my reward afterwards. I blush at the confession, but it must be made. Love is a natural pleasure; not that do I regard as culpable and humiliating, but that I should have lacked philosophy to rise superior to the selfish cynicism which comes with age; that I should have somewhat resembled those horrible old men who soil the youthful beauty they repel through a sort of savagery, sparing their victim less the more averse she seems, and delighting to exact the most degrading and it may be the most painful favours! I did not go as far as that; but I found a sort of spurious pleasure in making her unfaithful to the young coxcomb whom she loved and of whom I was jealous. Virginie fell in with all my desires; her lips belied the known affections of her heart; I knew it, but I let myself be deluded. Pleasure, contrary to my foolish expectation, strengthened my passion instead of killing it. Virginie had little art, but she was susceptible, a rare and precious gift. Also she had that charm possessed by Rosette the model, a beauty which women so often lack!* That half day slipped away in ecstatic pleasures. . . .

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*Martial.

Towards five o'clock Virginie seemed very anxious to leave, giving for reason that her mother would scold her. I let her go after she had promised that we should meet every other day.

Chance led me to go out myself almost immediately afterwards. I walked down by the riverside to inhale the fresh air and savour my recent pleasures, which I misnamed happiness. I was lost in dreams, when I thought I saw Virginie with the two carabineers. I quickened my pace and caught sight of her hiding from me among the alleys of the city wood-yard, which at this time was situated on the *Quai de la Tournelle*. It was a painful moment, but what could I do? I let her go, as I could not stop her. But her conduct completed the demoralisation of my passion; one can scarcely respect a mistress of whom one is jealous with good cause. . . . I went to the printer's, where I dissembled with Mourant, but sought to cure myself of

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*See my *Calendar*, 3rd November, 1774.

an emotion which was making me ill by talking to Lajeunesse. He told me that, on S. Peter's Day, Virginie had been to a wine garden with the carabineers (who lived together), and there had feasted them because (as she told them) she had just received some money, which she would enjoy spending all the more because it was extracted from a miser. . . . "But who can have given her the money," continued Lajeunesse, "for her uncle" (her seducer, Bonthoux) "is no spendthrift! . . . She must have got some one new!" I was cruelly wounded! It was my louis that had served to entertain her vile carabineers (not that their profession is vile; I am only referring to their sentiments), and perhaps the money I had given her for her apprenticeship would find the same destination. I was vexed at having given it to her. Then I understood how it was that Virginie, despite a good heart and an excellent disposition, was yet a very accomplished hussy. She had a lover, or rather a sneaking parasite who corrupted her, as well as a man who paid her keep and was repaid in favours. . . . It is impossible to estimate the harm done by such despicable wretches as Virginie's pretty scoundrel, who probably are only to be found in Paris and certain other great cities in Europe. They carry immorality to atrocious lengths and make their women do the same. Virginie's lover was called Compain, and was the son of a Beauce tailor. His patron, the Duc de Chartres (now d'Orleans), intended him to be an army surgeon. He was handsome, stupid and insipid, as we shall soon see. This little wretch was the ruin of the poor girl; before his coming she was faithful to the immoral Bonthoux, a barrister who no doubt would have given her a little establishment some day, had he not suspected her infidelity and cooled towards her. However, he continued to visit her at twelve francs a week, until, noticing that she never had a penny, he surmised that she was spending everything upon some fancy man, and became very close. Virginie sacrificed everything to her insane passion; she was convinced that Compain would marry her, because he had assured the ignorant child he would do so, accompanying his promise with the most solemn oaths. After I had given Virginie the money for her apprenticeship, he appeared in new silk stockings, a coquettish little suit and new silver buckles chosen with a pretty taste. These were a present from Virginie. This imprudent girl, carried away by her passion and deluded by the blind egotism of a coxcomb, ignored the wise advice of Aimonde Dartois; she made her apprenticeship impossible and exposed herself to my reproaches, and these she feared, for she was trembling whenever she came to see me afterwards. She was longing to ask for more money (for I was in receipt of the proceeds on my *Paysan perverti*), but she dared not. She was afraid that I would ask her to account for what I had already given her. So she had recourse to cunning and deceit. She loved Compain, yet she showered me with fond caresses; she asserted that she loved me, and strove to convince me that this was so. Thus can a pimp corrupt a good disposition! For love is by nature a virtue, but if the object of it is vicious its nature changes and it becomes a wellspring of the basest vice. Virginie's passion led her on to other and much more dangerous excesses! To get money for this young man, who assured her that he would marry her some day, the wretched girl – can I say it? – went to Decan's house and prostituted herself. She knew other women of the same stamp, and amongst them one quite near to the Comédie-Italienne. However, the discovery that Virginie (who had left the Rue du Fouarre to live on the Quai des Augustins) still had Bonthoux somewhat reassured me; I was shaken by jealousy, but I was less afraid of syphilis. . . . (Alas, nothing is more uncertain than her trade!)

Therefore I was far from imagining that the caresses of a girl, so young and so reserved compared with prostitutes properly so called, could endanger my health, when, on the eleventh day after we were first united (that is to say, on the 10th of July), I realised that I was infected. . . . I was in despair! Fortunately I knew the source of my disease, and the Aesculapius who could arrest it was my friend. I hastened to consult him, and an efficacious remedy administered at the right moment prevented it from getting any hold. . . . But, incredible as it may seem, this sickness of the body did not cure that of the heart. . . .

At this point I must describe a curious dinner party at Gronavet's lodging. Gronavet was separated from his wife who, after living for some time with the Abbé Delaporte, was now being kept by the barrister *Velhup*. (I shall be relating more of *Angélique* Telmitouff's* adventures.) Gronavet's housekeeper was a coarse woman named Louison whom he had taken out of a brothel; she lodged in his little room and slept in his bed under the very eyes of his two daughters, who had been deserted by their mother so that she could give herself more completely to her lover. Virginie excelled Louison at every point, and some days previously, puffed up with the pride and vanity born of Virginie's repeated assurances that she loved me, I had mentioned her to Gronavet, who evinced a curiosity to see her. I was dying to show her off to him, satisfied that his ugliness would prevent Virginie from ever making him my rival. But providence, who sees to it that unlawful pleasures shall have their sting, decreed that my disease should manifest itself on the very morning of this dinner! The memory of my unmerited attack in 1770 still terrified me, and I was in such a pitiable state that I vowed I would not open my door when

*Angélique Mitoufflet. [Ed.]

Virginie came to fetch me. (O my pure friends, Louise and Thérèse! Heaven avenges you for my mistaken virtue! Should I have been unfaithful to you? But it was with your sister! How strange is my life! Moreover I weep for you without ceasing.) Virginie arrived at midday in a carriage, and sent the coachman upstairs. I did not answer. Finally, when I saw her on the point of leaving after she had waited for half an hour, I let her see me. Then she came upstairs herself, asking: " Were you out?" Not only did I refrain from all reproaches, but a thought occurred to me which led me to form a generous resolution: "This disease is at an early stage, and I administered the antidote this morning. I will abandon myself for to-day to my sweet illusion, and not spoil the pleasure she anticipates. There is time enough to be miserable; let us snatch this day from our evil genius. . . ." My mind made up, I got ready with affected cheerfulness and we set out.

None the less my brow was clouded and, noticing this, Virginie pulled down the carriage blind and kissed me, asking in her pretty way: "What is the matter, Papa? Is something wrong?" "What!" I exclaimed. "Do you not know?" "Oh, what have I done?" "Deceiver, you do not love me!" "Yes, indeed I do, with all my heart. . . . Are you jealous perhaps? Ah, if you knew how I feel towards you, you would be quite certain that I love you! Is it impossible to love one man . . . and talk to others?" "If you only talked to them!" "A sad and bitter necessity sometimes drives us to do what our hearts revolt against and our reason condemns; but neither heart nor reason speaks against my papa. You have made a new person of me; I am what I never was before I knew you. . . . Why did I not meet you first? I would never have listened to anyone else!" "You still have Bonthoux, Mademoiselle?" "Is he the cause of your jealousy? Yes, I still have him, but I am ready to sacrifice him for you." "And Compain?" She turned pale. "Compain . . . is a young man. . . . Are you opposed to my marrying him some day?" "I! . . . But if I were certain of it, I would not behave with you as I have done." "But why, why? What harm does it do? . . . He knows about it, and . . . that I cannot do otherwise." The ingenuousness of her attitude to vice impressed me the more strongly because it reminded me of Zéphire, and I dropped a tear to the memory of my beloved child. We reached our destination and, softened by the thought of Zéphire, I kissed Virginie's hand as we were going up Gronavet's stairs, which restored all the child's gaiety as though our serious conversation had never taken place.

Before describing our dinner with Gronavet, I must pause to make an observation. "What a curious autobiography!" will be the remark of puritanical or starchy Readers, fools or evil men. "What is the use of giving us a string of commonplace adventures, which have nothing striking in them save a detail here and there due to your peculiar character? Is anything to be gained by writing about such things?"

O Puritans, neither you nor any man, ancient or modern, are acquainted with aught but romance, whether in narrative or dramatic form. No book is true to life: we do not see what we read; we do not read what we see. Authors are like prostitutes in this, that they make it a rule never to utter one word of truth, or, like the author of the *Chevalier de Faublas*, to "prismatise" facts before beginning to write. To see nothing but works devoted to falsehood angered me, so I have tried to write a book that is true, utterly true from one end to the other; I have tried to depict the happenings in a real life and bequeath it to posterity as an anatomy of character. I hold up a mirror which I know to be faithful and interesting: faithful because it reflects the truth, interesting by reason of the genuineness, strangeness, variety and multiplicity of incident with which my life has been filled, and my audacity in naming the persons involved and sacrificing them with myself to the public good. I have ardent passions, but none of those which brutalise, such as greed, drunkenness and indolence. I have always been active to excess in love, and my need of love and of possession has made me desire, seek and meet with adventures, astonishing in their profusion for a single lifetime. I am not relating all of these; I am omitting an infinity of passing fancies, which were isolated and without influence on my life, but were incredibly numerous. In composing this first manuscript I have left out a multitude of incidents which escaped me at the time of their occurrence, and which I note as I proceed in order to include them in a supplement.* And this is my object: having written the story of myself with strict attention to the truth, I can guarantee its veracity to Moralists, so that henceforward they can write their books and verbally instruct the human race in accordance with the facts of human nature. J.-J. Rousseau certainly told the truth, but he wrote too much as an author. Yet I bless his name when I read what he says about Mme de Warens. O pious Jean-Jacques! You saved your mamma from oblivion, and that is to save her from death! You have made us love her for her weaknesses, and that is better still; she is doubly immortalised! . . . I bless you. If I had not published *Le Paysan* in 1775, I should have been afraid lest Mme Parangon would be regarded as a parallel to Mme de Warens; but I am safe from any such suspicion. Jean-Jacques was still alive, and, far removed from his society, I never saw the manuscript of his *Confessions*. . . . I was saying

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*Compare my *Calendar*, wherein I try to supply all the details omitted from my autobiography so as to represent myself completely. It is a necessary supplement to this work. I shall omit in what follows the incident in which Virginie and I came to blows. Compare my *Malédiction Paternelle*.

that Jean-Jacques wrote too much as an author, and this I avoid, writing solely as a man. I will tell everything; I will show how a man, instead of improving with advancing years, too often deteriorates morally, especially in the social conditions of to-day; so that ordinarily the oldest men are also the most corrupt. . . . My object, I repeat, is to be of use to the Human Race, not by precepts fastidiously repeated, but by my honesty. I have not the least desire to be a moralist in the strict sense of the term, but I want my book and my personality to be an instrument in the hands of moralists, and for them to study in me and through me the sequence of human actions. That is the most excellent book of ethics, a book we have never had, and that I have always longed to write. May I be successful! May I survive the perils which surround me* long enough to write the final word! When it is finished, I am ready to die, for my work will be perfected and I shall have lived. How many men die without having found time in eighty years to fulfil the task of life! Bear with me then, dear Reader, now that you are reassured as to my motives. Do not be offended at me because I am a man and weak. It is for that that you should praise me; for had I nought but virtues to reveal, where would be the effort over self? Ah, I should never have had the effrontery to write my panegyric! It is because I have had the courage to strip myself before you, to expose my weaknesses, my imperfections and my shame in order that you may compare your fellows with yourself, and yourself with yourself, that I merit your gratitude and your affection; and the effort it costs me is so heroic that it should efface all my wrongs towards society, purge me and set me

*The dangers of which I was speaking in 1784, while composing this manuscript, are past (5th July, 1786, 10th Oct. 1796), but men whom I have mentioned in this Work are preparing others for me; and there are others yet which I cannot defy save by defying death itself.

among its benefactors! . . . Therefore I shall take courage to continue to detail my life, to scrutinise my heart and to expose the motives that underlay my actions. Study a man in indifferent circumstances, study him in misfortune! I am only a man, your brother, your like, your mirror – another you! . . .

I obtained more pleasure from Gronavet's surprise than I had expected; he was dazzled by Virginie's youthful and delicate attractions. His welcome excelled anything that could have been expected from a man who was not rich, and was moreover so mean and stingy that, when he gave a dinner, he was apt to tell his guests not to eat so much and would measure out the wine in driblets, not replenishing the glasses until he thought fit. Thanks to Virginie there was no stint. Our host left us for a moment to see that a fowl was added to the dinner, at the same time hurrying off to the actor Nainville to secure a ticket in the amphitheatre for two. Never perhaps had Gronavet been so polite. When we sat down to table he announced that we were not to leave it until it was time to go to the Italiens, where unfortunately Du Rosoy's *Les Mariages Samnites* was being played. Virginie was given a lavish helping, and as I had not the same luck by a long way, I whispered in her ear and she gave me some of what she had upon her plate. Gronavet was offended, but he dealt with the situation characteristically enough. He chose to regard Virginie's gifts as so many favours and, on the pretext that they were too precious for him not to be jealous of them, he often grabbed them on the wing, and swallowed them gluttonously. But he did not notice that his fat Louison was horribly jealous. "Aha," she said to me, "if they are going shares, we will look after ourselves." And she cut a piece off a ham pie from Lesage, and poured me out a full glass from the reserve bottle. Gronavet, who adored ham pie, found himself grievously embarrassed: he needed three hands and only had two, and these he fastened on what he had taken from Virginie and on the pie, with the result that he could not eat. Although we were usually moderate eaters (for Virginie had a small appetite), we forced ourselves to gobble and made our mouths even larger than the pieces we put into them. We forgot (or at least I forgot) all my reasons for anxiety in our amusement at our embarrassed host's expression. Virginie, with a woman's insight, realised her power over the little man better than anyone, and somewhat abused it. Prompted by fat Louison, she asked for everything that Gronavet had in the house to give us, and he flew to execute her slightest whim. He had no desire that we should have the least share in Virginie's fancies, but she refused to touch anything unless we joined her. So poor Gronavet had to consent, but he gave us such tiny helpings that we really had scarcely even a taste. . . . This entertainment lasted until five o'clock, when Louison warned us that it was time to go and take our places, and we set out.

Gronavet was wearing a little grey silk and linen suit which he had purchased the day before off a second-hand clothes dealer: I had never seen him look so clean. He offered his hand to Virginie and I, walking behind them, overheard the following. "Is it true that you are that fat philosopher's mistress? What a pity! A pretty person like you! I am younger. . . . If I dared . . . I would offer you my homage. . . ." Virginie looked over her shoulder and smiled at me. "I can hear you!" I said to Gronavet. He was not in the least abashed. "But am I not right? I am still of an age to love, and you are past it." "My papa past the age of love!" exclaimed Virginie. "No one can love as he does!" "I can, and better!" retorted Gronavet. "I will take your word for it, for I do not want to prove it!"

she answered. We reached the theatre. The ticket was only for two, so Gronavet took another at six francs in order to escort us to our seats, and had to leave us, very much against his will, just before the curtain rose. "A new conquest!" I said to Virginie. "To be honest, I am not in the least flattered," she answered. "He is the only man who has ever aroused an invincible repugnance in me." I did not scold her for this simple statement; it well depicted her natural way of thinking since certain men had spoiled her excellent disposition.

The play began, and it was spectacular enough to keep Virginie entertained. During the intervals she chatted to a woman who, it seemed to me, was there to hunt for "game." They behaved as though they were friends, and my experience of the effects of Virginie's favours reminded me of La Decan. My young friend seemed to have a large number of acquaintances not too fastidiously chosen. I was deeply hurt! Yet such had been the charm of our excursion to Bicêtre that Virginie, to all intents a prostitute and, what was worse, contagious, still enchanted me! . . . She shared an orange with the woman, and talked to her familiarly. I asked her in a whisper if she was acquainted with her neighbour. "Lud, no!" she answered. A young fop made a third in their conversation and Virginie hardly answered when I spoke to her. I grew a little cross and, catching sight of Audinot in the amphitheatre, I sought distraction by talking to him. At last the play came to an end, and Virginie left the theatre, enchanted by *Éliane* in the costume of a man and by all the other harlots in the caste. I thought that she was going to join her gossip and the young man. But no, she offered me her hand, and we went away together. I took her to the Palais Royal, and then home; but I noticed that she made me get out of the carriage at the top of the *Rue de Hurepoix*, so as to arrive at her door alone. Yet she was not afraid of her mother or of the neighbours' eyes; her penniless mother was obliged to connive in her daughter's trade, and as to the neighbours, Virginie considered that everyone had their profession and should not be ashamed of it. Her only fear was that of being seen by the exacting Compain who, with his sulks and quarrels, made a weak mistress suffer much; and yet the little wretch took advantage of her earnings! He was like the professional bullies who insist on having plenty of money, and then beat the poor girls no less for what they give them.

I took upon myself to call on Virginie's mother the day after this party, and begged her to send her daughter to me, so that I might disclose her condition and my own to her. I was struck by something in this woman's appearance, and she, on her side, examined me with curiosity. As I had asked for Virginie, who was out, she wanted to know my reason for requesting her daughter to visit me. I told her simply and sorrowfully. I described Virginie's character as it appeared to me, not in disparagement but rather in vindication. Her mother wept. "How wretched I am! I have two daughters: Virginie, who is most dear to me . . . and a younger one. . . . Necessity forced me to leave Paris; I went to Hamburg as a governess, and on my return I find my eldest daughter kept, and almost a prostitute . . . and one of my friends, Madame Besson, formerly the widow Gemon, who was an honest woman when I left, my daughter's pander . . . sacrificing her to pleasure parties on which she retained two-thirds of the profit. . . . I rescued her from this harpy, but as I could not keep her I had to be what Besson was. But at least I take care of her; I restrain her and do what I can to make her life less irregular. . . ." The longer I listened to this woman, the more I seemed to recognise her. But she was much changed! . . . And so was I! I had called myself Bertrô when I knew her in former times; and, when she asked for my address, I gave her my own name, adding that her daughter knew it; so she thought she was mistaken. And I was a hundred leagues from imagining that I was in the presence of a woman whom I had idolised as a girl. Yet as I turned away, I said to myself: "That woman is a little like Mademoiselle Jarrye Datté. . . . I should have asked her her maiden name, for Virginie has only mentioned her married name." I went indoors to wait. But first a word about the mother.

She had married Pointot. Widowed at the end of six months, she married a lemonade seller, and became acquainted with Mme Lallemand. Her second husband only lived three months, and Jarrye, once more a widow, went back to her family. Her father was acquainted with the baker François, and thought it would be a good stroke of business to bestow his daughter on him; but he concealed the fact that Jarrye was a mother because the child was a girl. She had sent this child away after its birth, had it baptised as a boy and persuaded Pointot that he was the father of a son, no doubt for excellent reasons. The lemonade seller, for I know not what reason seeing that she was a widow, believed his wife to be a virgin, and did not want to spoil a waist which everyone admired. When François married her he thought she was childless, and they let him continue to think so. Although this man was another Parangon and martyrised his wife, they did not at first have children; but Jarrye pretended to be pregnant, so that he should exhaust her less, and had her supposed lying-in while he was away buying corn. On his return, the child had been put out to nurse so he did not see it, and when it was taken away from the nurse, he found it had grown quite big. But as his wife had in the meanwhile given him another daughter he had no suspicions. . . . He was ruined and there were no more secrets. He dissipated what remained of Pointot's fortune and . . . even tried to violate Virginie, who gave herself to Bonthoux to escape from him. . . . That, in a few words, is the story of this unhappy mother, for I came to know her intimately. I had some suspicions; but I did not know whose daughter Virginie really was.

The girl came to my lodging at about five o'clock. I addressed her seriously, for, after her conduct on the day before, I expected her to receive what I had to say with loud reproaches and effrontery. "Mademoiselle," I began, "it is impossible for Monsieur Bonthoux to go on living with you for the time being!" "He has left me." "I can well believe it! You are not in a position to be with anyone, not even your dear Compain. . . . You have . . ." (and I was explicit) . . . She turned pale and her eyes filled with tears. She assured me that she had noticed nothing and that she had thought herself in perfect health; and that Bonthoux's only complaint had been that she paid too much attention to me. "I know," I answered, "from my own behaviour that the infection can only have come from you. The attack is slight, and the symptoms are not terrible; but it is the real thing, and the disease is established. Directly I noticed it yesterday, I fetched the remedy and applied it yesterday and again this morning. . . ." Virginie's tears flowed faster, and she made a sort of general confession. She admitted her relations with Compain, but assured me that he was going to marry her. I tried to disabuse her, but she loved him. . . . Her behaviour was so different from what I had expected that pity bound me to her anew. I asked what her mother's name had been, and learned that I had rediscovered Mlle Jarrye Datté. I said not a word, but this discovery made me ready to overlook anything in Virginie. I suggested that she should be treated by my Aesculapius, Dr. Préval, and took her to him myself. A word of introduction was enough, for her face and manner spoke for her and there was no further need for me.

My affair with Virginie was the first in which I played the part of an old man, for thus do girls of eighteen regard a man of forty-two. I did not like the part. I was the jealous lover, and another (Compain) the favoured rival. I tried to get rid of him; but one of my attempts to do so caused a quarrel between myself and Virginie, which made me realise that it was impossible. I must confess that we came to blows in this quarrel, with the result that Virginie abused her power over me to such a point that she made me promise to visit Compain, with whom I had had angry words only that very evening. The idea revolted me; but I preferred even this to breaking with an unfortunate girl whose artless character still afforded me some moments of delight; I preferred it to breaking with . . . my daughter (though I was still uncertain of this). . . . I hoped much from so sweet a disposition joined to so lovely a face. But circumstances ordained that my visit should prove an amusing distraction.

Early next morning I called at Compain's lodging in the grocer Machy's house. I roused him by knocking loudly and calling out my name. He came to the door shivering, although the dog-days were upon us. I could see what he was thinking: the poor little rat had no courage save with *Misses*, and not always with them even, and he imagined that I had come to challenge him to a duel. Directly I realised what was in his mind, I resolved to extract some amusement from the situation. So I approached my business by long circumlocutions, he standing in his shirt, holding the door a little open, I outside, with my hat pulled well over my eyes, my sword at my side and one hand on the pommel: I have never seen anyone so thoroughly frightened! Compain was certainly as slightly built as he was pretty; his thin carcase reminded one of a half-starved hound. Jealousy died as I looked at him and gave place to pity. Wherefore I abandoned my tortuosities, and told him that I was quite willing to fall in with Mlle Virginie's wish that we should live as good friends. We embraced, although high words had passed between us the evening before, when brave Compain had been supported by five or six other carabineers, one of whom had suggested throwing me over the parapet into the water. Love gives courage; the carabineers had been standing in a circle when I heard this remark, I had walked straight into the middle of it and defied the lot of them, including two who were much more dangerous than Compain and ground their teeth at me. I had related the incident to Virginie, not without making fun of her beloved. She forgave me, but took care never to mention the matter to Compain. This passing connection with Compain turned to Virginie's disadvantage. He had something to complain of, and so had I; and in such case men are no better than the most loose-tongued woman, because they have been forced into an inferior position and any weak creature is just as feminine as a woman. At such times a man loves to find relief for his enforced suffering by talking about it. It is not as women that women chatter so much, but as weaklings. A masterful woman talks no more than a masterful man: all despots are laconic. In this first conversation Compain diverted me very much by telling me that, on the day of my excursion to the Bois de Boulogne with Virginie, the widow and Mourant, Virginie had given him an appointment in the Hospital meadow, and he had waited for her there the whole afternoon while she amused herself with strangers. I smiled, at the same time reflecting on the wretched position of a girl who was forced to betray the man she loved for indifferent acquaintances. The day we went to Bicêtre she had sent Compain to the *Quai de la Vallée*, but she was afraid that he might return in the evening to wait for her at the end of the Rue du Fouarre; hence her eagerness to be quit of me at the foot of the *Montagne Sainte-Geneviève.* As I was anxious, for Virginie's sake, to provoke a quarrel between the lovers, I dwelt on every detail of my excursions with her, and could see that I was turning the knife in the wretched little man's heart. Indeed I should have been touched if he had been less mean-spirited, or if Virginie's position had been otherwise; for these were his words when I had finished: "I love her, and if I must not see her again, then I would rather die!"

That very evening Compain gave Virginie a digest of our conversation, and if I had wanted to revenge myself on her I should have succeeded beyond my hopes. She was at once grieved, abashed and furious. Compain's revelations had caused a bitter and most justifiable quarrel between the lovers; she sighed and tears were in her eyes as she told me about it. She did not venture to reproach me, but she could not conceal how much she was distressed at having caused our meeting by forcing me to call on Compain. For myself, I blushed for the hateful part in which I found myself for the first time; every day brought some fresh humiliation. Sometimes I would see Virginie slipping furtively into Compain's lodging, sometimes on her way to the Maison-Blanche with him. One evening I saw them go into his lodging together. Compain shut the passage-way door, but I found patience to wait until someone came out so that I could enter. From the staircase I could see Virginie with the two carabineers; I heard her lover suggest that she should sleep there, and Virginie answer in her silvery and vibrant tones: "What! I, sleep here!" But on another occasion she did sleep there. I saw her enter the room and get into bed between the two carabineers. And what a bed! A pallet, which was only big enough for one! I saw her leave the house next morning at six o'clock to get to her own bed in her mother's apartment.

I complained to Virginie of everything that I saw, and she did nothing but moan or scold. She was afraid of me, and she hated me. . . . At last I faced my position frankly. I wanted to break with Virginie, but her situation and her artless graces touched me equally. She had no one but me, for Bonthoux had given her up entirely. He had followed her to my door one day, when she was coming to see me, and then made enquiries of my landlady as to who lived on the floor to which she had gone, and the information given him by La Debée, who was a great gossip, led him to cease visiting a girl of whom he could no longer be sure. It is amazing that he should never have noticed Compain, who was always with her when she was living in Praiter's house; that he never had any suspicions of Praiter himself; and that he paid no attention to the women with whom she went out. . . . Weary and humiliated, I longed ardently to part from this girl, who at first had shed a certain charm on our relations. But I was held against my will, as much by a sort of pride as by compassion and the memories awakened by her mother, whom I had loved and had possessed; by an instinct also which, whatever anyone may say, is physical; by certain half-caught resemblances in the child's features.

After we were both cured of our indisposition, I used to take Virginie and her mother to the Fair of *Saint-Ovide*, and it was here that the desired opportunity presented itself. . . . One evening, when we were taking a turn round the fair, we were followed by Compain (to whom I no longer spoke because I despised him) and by seven or eight of his comrades. They surrounded us in the Café Caussin; but the stern aspect assumed by her mother prevented them from speaking to Virginie. However they followed us when we left the fair and, on the *Quai des Quatre Nations*, Compain approached to within ten paces of me under cover of the shadows cast by the buildings, for there was a moon. "I think you have something to say to me?" I said, stopping, and he retired again. We reached Virginie's apartment without their having dared to accost us, but her mother, fearing a night attack in the Rue de la Bûcherie or elsewhere, kept me to sleep with them, somewhat against her daughter's wishes. Personally I should have preferred my own bed, but, reflecting how it would mortify Compain and his friends to see me sleeping under the same roof as Virginie, I let myself be persuaded. Compain serenaded us with the tenderest songs until after midnight. Like the nightingale, he had nothing but a song and a few feathers. . . . As he prevented us from going to sleep, it occurred to Virginie's mother to get up and throw him a sou wrapped up in paper, saying at the same time: "Stop now, good man. Here is something to pay for your lodging." And she actually did get up, but only to ask me to open the window and, appearing at it in shirt and night-cap, deliver the compliment myself. This I did, with the result that Compain uttered a cry of rage, his friends burst out laughing, and the whole lot of them disappeared. They certainly lay in wait for me; but though they were seven or eight to one, I think I could have frightened these shallow giddypates. I rose at dawn and went to rest in my own bed, but in the evening I was back again, and prowled about Virginie's door for more than an hour. Finally I went in, and suggested an excursion to the Fair. Mme François refused, but Virginie was so insistent that she had to be taken there. "Be careful how you behave!" her mother said to her. "I only want to put things right," answered Virginie, "and to scold Compain. Just let me speak to him!"

We reached the Fair without seeing our friend of Chartres or any of his comrades.

We were making our third tour of the fair when Virginie caught sight of a pastel drawing of a child with the loveliest face. She exclaimed on its beauty: "That is the prettiest thing in the Fair!" "Only if you were not present!" remarked a man of about forty-five. He followed her without my noticing it, for I was looking out for Compain and his friends, but when we were sitting in the Café Caussin, she told us all the man had said to her and pointed him out, staring at her through a broken pane. She warned me that she was going to call me Uncle, and I fell in with a jest which was to become serious. *Delport*, M. *Boutin's* cashier, followed us to Virginie's house; and next day made proposals to her in writing. From this moment our parts were changed, and Virginie became confiding and affectionate with me. She accepted Delport's offers, and continued to meet Compain, while urging me with all her strength to visit her frequently. In a word, had it not been for Compain, she would have convinced me that she loved me. (No doubt she was impelled by another sentiment. . . .) Delport lodged her well in the Rue Poissonière and paid her keep, but he managed to make himself so thoroughly disliked that at the end of eighteen months Virginie refused to see him again. She apprenticed herself to a milliner below the Quai de Gèvres, and here Mourant, who had a bookshop there, made a scandalous scene with her.

Now that Virginie needed me no more, reason urged me to withdraw; but her new radiance made me regret her in spite of myself. To complete my cure and break the habit of running off to see her in the Rue Poissonière I sought out Mlle Tulout again, that same Élise whose letters to the number of twenty occur in the *Malédiction Paternelle.*

Élise had left the Rue Saint-Nicolas-Martin, and was living in the old Forage Office in the *Rue de la Mortellerie.* Martinville, who had introduced me to her when she was living in the Rue Saint-Nicolas-des-Champs, gave me her new address. I wrote to her, and her reply, which can be seen in the *Malédiction* on page 428, was favourable. I flew to her. But how changed she was from eight years previously! It was only a patched-up affair. . . . Her favours held me for a few weeks, at the end of which I met Lisette there, and the fear that I should grow too fond of this young lady drove me away. I never saw either of them again. Always I fled from anything that might have given me peace and happiness. Élise had a little girl of nine with her, but I found out who she was too late.

With the cessation of my visits to Élise I decided that Virginie was to be my last adventure, and wrote *Le Quadragénaire*, which is no more than a thinly disguised account of my relations with her. To this I added the story of the little milliners of Mme Monclar (Victorine Guisland), who lived in the corner house of the *Rue de Grenelle-Honoré.* . . . But before describing this playful interlude, I must finish the story of Élise and Virginie. I would refer it to my *Calendar* were it not necessary to note certain details here.

I saw much of Virginie while she was living in the *Rue de Bussy* (in a lodging which I had procured for her mother, near the watch-house). Since our cure I loved her of necessity, as I had no wife and did not want to deprive Virginie of the money I should otherwise have given to another. Besides, as I only visited her by stealth, I never suffered from satiety. Thus her favours became a habit. I only saw her once in private in the apartment furnished for her by Delport in the *Rue Poissonière*, and then I was treated like another Compain. Delport was due to arrive, and Virginie made her mother stand sentry at the window, at the same time opening the door into the alcove, which communicated with Mme François's room, so that I could escape in case of surprise. I was treated as a passionately loved lover. . . . Yet it was my last visit for the time. . . . The singular part I was playing impressed me so unfavourably after I had left her, that I felt I must see no more of her and resolved not to visit my Circe again. . . . But every day I was tempted to return.

I had recourse to Élise, as I have said, and she readily granted me the favours which I needed in order to forget the charms of Virginie, whom I did not see for two whole years. . . . (I am writing in a disorderly fashion. . . .) Let us take advantage of this interval to complete the story of Élise.

This amiable girl has since considered me ungrateful. She is wrong: I acted generously. Her neighbour Lisette, who often used to come and amuse herself with us, attracted me as strongly as did Virginie, and I was so frightened by my growing fondness that I chose rather to give up both girls than to force Élise to witness an inconstancy which would have wounded her. But if I had known the truth then as I did later, how happy I could have been without any infidelity! But no one told me anything. Lisette's aunt, a most forbidding woman of fifty, was watchful and taciturn. . . . Élise was in despair when my visits ceased, as can be seen by her letters in the *Malédiction Paternelle*; and indignation alienated her. At the same time her brother *Nerville*, who was so deeply attached to her, died, and, unable to bear the double blow, she acceded to her father's urgent requests, and joined him in Geneva. When she was beyond my reach I regretted her. She heard this from Martinville, and then, as she was about to breathe her last, she sent me certain information . . . which might have saved me had she given it to me in 1777. By her wish I was told that Lisette was the daughter of myself and of that gentle Mme Greslot whom I had possessed in circumstances described above (1755), and that the pretty child of nine, whom I had seen with Élise (and who is now just on fifteen), was her daughter and mine. . . . It was a terrible blow, and I cursed the cruel fate that condemned me to be deprived of all my belongings! My regrets for Omphale were reawakened. . . . I wrote to Élise in order that we might come together again, but the letter arrived on the day after her funeral in Geneva. I could not find Lisette, nor hear anything about Élisette, her sister. These two children, with so many others, were lost to me.

Reader, you have heard how bitterly I regretted Louise and Thérèse! (Alas, all this happened in the twelve years during which I avoided them!) Very well then, my regrets for Élise were yet more bitter, as my wrongs to her were greater and that which I lost with her, Lisette and Élisette, was perhaps more to be regretted! Why have I always been so unlucky? What evil genius has pursued me, pursues me, and will pursue me to the grave? I left Élise, my friend and formerly my sweetheart, because I felt I was becoming too fond of pretty young Lisette, her friend and neighbour, and my affair with Virginie had lacerated my heart! As we know, Lisette lived with an aunt. I did not like this woman: not because she was ugly, one is not pretty at fifty, but her conversation did not please me. Thus everything tended to drive me away, except Lisette, and of her I was afraid. . . . Oh, what agony! I caused Élise despair, and failed to recognise my pretty Élisette, I whose heart always went out to my children. . . . I fled from an amiable family which belonged entirely to me, seeing that Lisette, who lived with her paternal aunt, was Mlle Greslot's daughter, and her daughter by me. How pleasant a life I could have led with my two daughters and my old sweetheart, who would have been another and a tender, virtuous wife to me. . . . That is what I lost! . . . Forgive, forgive, O my Élise, my wife! Forgive! You are no more! You died . . . perhaps of grief! . . . In the course of our later interviews you promised to make me happy, but you never told me *how*. Forgive, divine Élise! You gathered round you those in whom I was interested and who could attach me to you, and you never told me! You thought that I was still in love with Virginie and that I would doubly defy Nature's laws! Yet I loved Virginie at Nature's prompting! No, happiness was not for me. For what did I need? Only to recognise you, Lisette, Élisette and Virginie, for what you were, bring you together, make you at least friends, see you and love you without jealousy on your part! A cruel destiny willed it otherwise, or rather I did not deserve it! Whenever I remember Élise, her life, her death . . . I am overwhelmed with remorse and regret! I was the cause of all the misfortunes that brought her to the grave. She had committed faults, but Heaven is my witness that it was not these which drove me from her.

We must tell all about our friends when certain unusual actions bring no discredit upon them. Élise, with her charming face and nineteen years, had three favoured lovers in 1768, not to mention as many suitors for her hand in marriage. She dismissed the latter, declaring that she would never marry. Her conduct had something to do with me, but it was also prompted by her fear of driving her brother Nerville to despair. For the three lovers who were not suitors were her . . ., her brother the painter, and her young and handsome brother Nerville. We know how I was received. Father and brothers favoured me, hoping that I would pave the way for them, but this was unnecessary. Élise was a philosopher before ever she met me. Doubtless she showed favouritism, but for noble motives; I know what they were, and they did her credit. She banished the greatest crime of crimes, therefore she did some good. As for Nerville, she saved his life; that I know. He was always attached to her and always faithful; he comforted her in the grief I caused her, and never left her. He died, and it was his death that Élise could not survive. It was not the brother or the lover that she most regretted; it was the friend, the devoted friend. . . . O estimable brother and sister! Cursed be he who condemns you! Whoever he is, he is a vile wretch and does not understand you! How happy this poor girl might have been, with her excellent disposition, had she had neither father, nor elder brother, nor a lover who was always occupied and whom poverty forced to work continually! Of all my female acquaintances, Élise, Marie-Jeanne, Colombe and Marianne Tangis are the only ones on whose account I still feel remorse. If I had chosen, in 1768 and 1769, Élise need have endured nothing of what she suffered; I would have guarded her from all attack, and intimidated any who assailed her. Her faults (if faults they were) were my crimes. Her charming body belonged to me, to me, poor but beloved. . . . But my affections were too diffused; I worshipped at too many altars; my imagination was too wayward. And as I grew old my blunted emotions needed to be jarred awake. . . . But let us return to Virginie. . . .

As I was passing down the Rue de la Harpe in 1780, a little earthenware lamp fell at my feet, two houses beyond the *Rue Serpente.* I looked up and saw Virginie. . . . I went up to her apartment, and she threw herself into my arms. She had dismissed Delport, who was jealous and of an insatiable lust, and had then taken a certain *Prince de Tingry*, or *de Ligne*, or both. At the moment she was almost the wife of an attorney's clerk, who provided a meagre living for herself, her mother and her little sister. Virginie offered me her younger sister's rose. I felt ashamed of myself, yet there was no way of refusing save by showing my preference for the elder. . . .

I had paid five or six visits to Virginie before I made my great discovery. One day I found Rosette, the younger sister, alone, and the little girl, who was sixteen years old, caressed me in a thousand ways. I could not extricate myself and was about to fly from certain danger, when her mother came in. Then I felt safe, and even warned the mother to keep an eye upon her younger daughter. "Do you think I behave like that to everyone?" asked Rosette. "No, she is only like that with you," said her mother. "She cannot remain a good girl. She must have someone, and your behaviour to her elder sister, the services you have rendered her, and the way in which she has deceived you, led us to decide to repay you by presenting you, purely as a gift, with my Rosette's maidenhead." These words surprised me more than anything that had gone before, and I remonstrated with her. "It must be," repeated Mme François. "Yes, it must be!" exclaimed her daughter. "It must be!" added Virginie, entering the room, "and quickly; for she has no time to lose. . . . Come, Rosette, get into position; it should have been done already." The three women caressed me, and Rosette pressed her lips to mine. Luckily someone came in! . . . (This incident is incredible, but it is true.) . . .

After this moral lapse we chatted awhile. Mme François seemed gay; Rosette was radiant, and Virginie most affectionate. "Now I need not reproach myself so much when I deceive you," she said, "for I am certain to do so." And her mother added: "Every time I see you, you remind me of someone who loved me three or four days before my marriage with

Monsieur Pointot!" This was the first time she had ever mentioned her first husband's name; I still thought she had only been married to M. François. "Pointot?" I said quickly. "Yes, he was my first husband. My name was Jarrye Datté, and my father was a wax merchant. The young man in question lived on the fourth floor of Bonne Sellier's house in the Rue des Trois Portes. Virginie is his daughter." "His daughter!" I exclaimed, turning pale. "Yes, yes." I tried to dissemble, but Virginie began to caress me, and I exclaimed: "As a daughter, as a daughter! . . . I am the young man of the Rue des Trois Portes." Then the three women uttered a cry of joy, and almost suffocated me with caresses. Not a sign of remorse; they did not feel it. Rosette was the first to congratulate herself on being destined for me. Virginie worshipped me; and her mother embraced me over and over again. . . . I left the house in a state of unparalleled emotion.

From that moment Virginie treated me like a god, and with this beloved daughter I enjoyed a father's happiness. Her mother made much of me and dressed with care when I was expected, which she had never done before. And thus rejuvenated, I remembered her perfectly. . . . Only once did I fall with her, vanquished by her caresses, and the fruit was a daughter who is now, April the 27th, 1792, eleven years old. . . .

One day Virginie said to me: "Do bring your legitimate daughter Agnès to see me just once, so that I may kiss her." I showed some hesitation. "If you will bring her I will present you with another daughter." "But how?" "Yes, I will: a certain Mademoiselle *Hollier*, the daughter of a clock-maker's wife whom you loved once on a time. She is sixteen or seventeen years old, and her mother has told her her father's name. Now that I know that you are my Papa, I know also that she is my sister; for her mother, who only died three years ago, told her that you had written *Le Paysan perverti.*" "I would have brought my daughter Agnès to see you without that," I answered; and as a matter of fact I introduced the two girls that very day. Rosette was present also. It is impossible to describe how much these three young people were attracted to one another! . . . Agnès found Virginie especially charming, and has often spoken to me about her since. . . . Yet Virginie was discreet enough not to mention their common parentage.

Next day before young François had had the chance to see her again, I met the beautiful brunette Dartois, whom her mother had called Aimonde, in my honour, and had occasion to recognise her for what she was, as may be seen in my *Calendar*, the 26th of November.

On my next visit to Virginie, a new surprise awaited me! . . . Rosette, her younger sister, was the fruit of an adventure Jarrye had had in the Rue du Marais, faubourg Saint-Germain, with my friend Gaudet, who, finding he had no taste for law, had set up as a pastrycook at the sign of the Pomme-d'Or, Rue des Lombards. The adventure took place at the house of his cousin, a lemonade seller of the same street, where two gossips, Mme François and the wife of a horse-dealer named Vautier, were dining with their friend the lemonade seller's wife. Gaudet was invited too, and after dinner and some liqueurs, the women began to tease their apparently simple-minded fellow guest, whom they took for some sort of a *Mazet de Lamporecchio.* Mme Vautier for fun lay down with Gaudet, but he so harried her that she fled into an empty room. Gaudet did not see where she had gone and, in searching for her, came across Mme François. "You shall pay for your friend," he said, and tumbled her on her back. They were extremely busy when Mme Vautier, growing impatient because no one came to find her, timidly opened the door a crack, peeped in, and saw them in the midst of the major operation. She burst out laughing, but this did not in the least disturb the protagonists; so she went in search of her cousin and the two women bounced noisily into the room. Gaudet saw the intruders and ground his teeth with anger, love or pleasure – one or the other, or perhaps all three. He had just brought matters to a conclusion, but, redoubtable performer that he was, he threw himself upon the horsecoper's wife and forced her to take Mme François's place, while the others looked on marvelling! Having finished this exploit, he appeared calmer, and his hostess, the wife of his cousin Gaudet, remonstrated with him at some length. Gaudet listened modestly until he had recovered from his fatigue and then hurled himself upon the preacher and, with a little help from the others who feared their friend's tongue, carried the citadel by assault. She screamed. "I'll shut your mouth for you," cried Gaudet. "You'd blab, would you? . . . But now you are all three on a level, a level, a level! . . ." And he went on repeating the last phrase.

Such, according to her mother, was the origin of Rosette (and of *Julie* of the *Nuits de Paris*, volume XVI). All three women became pregnant and were well pleased to be so, as two of them had no children. . . . The whole story amazed me and I went away lost in thought.

I see our Puritans knit their brows over these free and freely enough described adventures. Friend Reader, I only retail them with reluctance. It is a terrible thing to write one's life under compulsion to tell the whole truth! A hundred times the pen has dropped from my fingers! . . .

When I was aware of the relation in which these two sisters stood to me, I busied myself with ways of helping them in accordance with their position and my limited means. I was acquainted with two men who could save them from the gulf which lay across their path and who would provide for their futures. Both girls had good dispositions and I saw that they would give my two acquaintances the kind of happiness that suited them; whence I concluded that my friends would do the same for them. One of my guiding principles is that happiness is everything. Make a man happy or a woman happy and you have done all that is necessary: reckon up the result, and you will find that, at the same time, you have made them good, that is to say, amiable, kind and obliging; in fact that you have given them all the social virtues. Very wrongly, then, does Jesuah say in his Gospel: *Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness, and all these things shall be added unto you.* According to this teaching my maxim is absurd. Rather should he have said: "Seek ye happiness first and, in finding that, everything else will be added to you. . . ." For, in fact, he who desires happiness sees with the first step he takes in search of it that it cannot lie in crime, that is to say, in suffering. To possess a girl or woman is in itself no crime; it only becomes so when it is done to her detriment and her ultimate unhappiness; to make a woman happy by possessing her is a fine action. There is no happiness save in goodness, benevolence, charity and love of others. Pleasure is only a less solemn name for virtue.

My decision taken, I spoke to a prince of the house of *de Bouillon*, a kindly, honest fellow, preyed upon by less honest women, and one who, like in temperament to myself, felt the absolute necessity of someone to fill his heart. I offered him my daughter. "But, my dear Nicolas," exclaimed the good fellow, "you are known, and so am I. It will compromise you to give your daughter to me." Then I explained in what manner Virginie was my daughter. "Ah, that is quite a different matter. I will do something for her even if she does not please me, and if she does her future is assured." On this I sent Virginie, escorted by her mother, to see the Prince de Bouillon, forbidding them to mention my name. Virginie charmed him beyond all expression, but he told her that he was expecting the daughter of a friend, and could make no decision until after having seen her. . . . The three women (for they had taken Rosette also) returned with this answer, and I hurried off to the Prince. "My dear Nicolas," he said, "it would be a great kindness if you would not bring your daughter to me. She would only deprive me of the sweetest vision. I saw a girl this morning who, judging by the ardent feelings she inspired, will certainly make me happy. . . . She is pretty enough, but she has a voice which goes to the very soul. . . ." "Nevertheless I will present my daughter to you" (I had instructed the three women to follow me). "Very well, then. Let us see her." I went into the antechamber and led Virginie in by the hand. "Is that your daughter?" cried M. de Bouillon. "Yes, Prince." "Ah, my friend! I accept her as the most precious of gifts!"*

Virginie was, in fact, cherished by the prince during his lifetime, and he provided for her future.

I was counting on a friend of less exalted rank for Rosette, but had not the good fortune to succeed; the obstacles to their union were too great. I shall be referring to this matter again after *Sara*. . . .

For the moment I am going to describe a strange and childish diversion to which I have already alluded.

I used to go and watch Victorine's little milliners at work. Besides my amiable blonde, who interested me prodigiously, there were three other pretty ones: *Améthyste*, eldest daughter of Mme Monclar (Victorine Guis-

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*On the publication of my *Nouvel Abeilard* the crippled prince had written asking me to visit him. Such was the origin of our acquaintance.

land); Victorine, or Pretty-Lips, her second daughter; and a dimpled brunette, Amélie by name, who was one of the hands and very clever at her craft. The latter's name endeared her to me, but she was surpassed by her blonde comrade, and it was to *Agathe* (for so they called her although this was not her name) that I longed to write and sing. Agathe kept the books, and I thought she was Mme Monclar's eldest daughter for she was fair like Victorine. "What a beautiful complexion," I said to myself. "She has Zéphire's colouring!" So I would go and watch her of an evening, and address musical impromptus to my Agathe, who, however, as she sat at the other end of the shop in the mistress's place, could not hear them so well as the girls placed with their backs to the windows. During the interval occupied by the events which I have just been describing, Agathe disappeared and Améthyste kept the books. But she was too young. So I centred my affections on the dear name of Amélie (Suadèle), and this was not difficult as she had an agreeable face, combined a very white skin with her dark colouring and had a trick of dress which pleased me as much as did her pretty appearance: she always wore high-heeled shoes upon her dainty feet. I fell into the habit of singing to her by name, of writing to her (as we shall see) and of throwing into rhyme next morning the impromptus I had sung to her the night before.

This amusement gave me intense pleasure for two reasons: in the first place, the whole situation had a charm for me which in itself was enough to interest me in Victorine's girls without need of speaking to them, that is to say, without danger to my heart (as we know, Virginie had frightened me of love); for this kind of intrigue recalled those times dear to my memory, when I would rap at Zéphire's window in the *Rue de Savoie*, and sing some air expressive of our mutual affection. In the second place, the demoiselles Monclar were, as I have said, the nieces of Amélie-Suadèle who was so nearly my wife.

In 1774, that is to say just after Mme Monclar had established herself at the corner of the *Rue de Grenelle* (in place of *La Devilliers*, Mme Dubarry's milliner) and before I was aware that she was Victorine, I had noticed two pretty girls in her shop, a blonde to the right as one entered and a brunette to the left. In doubt as to which I preferred, it struck me that it would be amusing to write them a joint letter wherein I declared my equal and divided love. Mme Monclar saw my letter and laughed a great deal over it. Then for the time I abandoned this diversion: first I was busy printing *Le Paysan*; then I had other troubles, and then Virginie, that is to say, more troubles of another kind; then came Élise and yet more troubles. But in the month of September 1776, when Delport was making Virginie's acquaintance, I returned to my pretty shop. Things had a little changed: one of my two beauties (the brunette) had left, but Victorine's three elder daughters were there, and very lovely they were. The youngest of them sat with her back to the window on the Rue de Grenelle. I wrote no letters to begin with, but sang to them, as I used to sing to Zéphire, withdrawing directly they opened the curtains. As I have said, she to whom I addressed my homage, the pretty blonde who had first attracted my attention when her place was to the right of the door, was out of earshot, so that I could scarcely make myself heard by her. She was really divinely beautiful. I believed her to be Mme Monclar's daughter because she kept the books and because she resembled her. At last I resolved to write to her; but it was necessary that the letter should pass through other hands before it could reach her, therefore I made it of such a nature that it could be read by everybody to their edification. She received it the same evening, and I saw her reading it at the shop door. I walked past her, saying: "I made love to your grandmother, I made love to your mother, and now I am making love to you." She burst into a peal of laughter as she turned into the shop, and remarked: "How very amusing!" as she closed the door. I spoke more truly than I thought. What I had meant was that I had known Mme Guisland as a still pretty woman, and Victorine as a young and charming girl, and that I found her, whom I believed to be the former's daughter, enchanting also. But I only discovered afterwards that my Fair was Zéphirette, Zéphire's daughter and mine, so that I really had made love to Nannette, to Zéphire, and to our bewitching child.

Victorine did not recognise me by my letter; perhaps it was never shown to her. Zéphirette (as I think I have already said) was married in 1775 or '76, and established in the *Rue du Petit-Lion-Saint-Sauveur*, without Manon Gaudet telling me anything about it. I had not deserved this treatment, but perhaps she had good reasons for it.

After Zéphirette (whom I called Agathe in my letter) had disappeared, the fancy took me to address my letters to the pretty eldest Monclar, whom I thought to be the second daughter, and to whom I gave the name of Hortense, just as I always called the next sister Victorine and the third Suzette. Therefore my first letters were intended for her, but they had to pass through the hands of those whose places were by the window on to the Rue de Grenelle. One evening Améthyste threw the torn copy of a letter out of window, and I picked it up. "She has been writing a letter," I said to myself. "Let's have a look at it." Next day I copied it out and slipped it through the ventilating window on the Rue Honoré and it met with the unfortunate success I describe in *La Malédiction Paternelle*. Here is Améthyste's note: *Why did you look so ill-humoured yesterday? You* *are quite well, from what you told me? Then what can be the cause? For I cannot believe that I am responsible. If, however, this should be the case, then I think you should have told me so at once, and not force me to ask: "What is the matter?" every time we meet. For nothing hurts me so much as to see you looking like that. Truly, my friend, it distresses me! But then perhaps I have distressed you even more? I do not know. Tell me, for I am perplexed and that torments and frets me more than anything. Follow Mme de Maintenon's advice, and reprove your wife with gentleness. She is still young, and matters can be mended. I have not the courage to be vexed with you: if I listened to my reason, I would be; but when I listen to my heart, I have to forgive you, if, by chance, you have been in the wrong. Ah, my friend! You have a good little wife, who loves you and will never weary of telling you so as long as she lives.*

I added a word of praise at the bottom of this note:

> *A charming letter, Mademoiselle, which does equal honour to your heart and to your head! Touchingly simple to begin with, the end (from the passage concerning Mme de Maintenon) is a masterpiece of sensibility and delicacy. Can it be the work of a young person not yet sixteen years of age? . . . Do you, then, combine, Mademoiselle, a cultivated mind with the bloom of radiant youth, the charms of a lovely face with a sensitive and delicate soul? Happy a thousand times the mortal to whom your pretty note is addressed! I would give half my blood to receive one like it from the hand of my charmer.*
>
> P.S. – *I am keeping the original and shall treasure it all my life.*

It was about this time that one of the work-girls attracted my attention. She was prettier than the others and sat in a corner which I could approach unobserved. It was Amélie, and I chose her window for my musical and verbal impromptus. Everyone thought I had designs upon her, whereas in fact I had only made her the object of an imaginative passion, because she was conveniently situated and because I had heard her called Amélie.

However, I addressed myself exclusively to her and, in the mistress's absence, when everyone in the shop lent me a flattering attention, I would pay her compliments in a low voice. Several times young Suzette Monclar and her brother tried to take me by surprise, but I was nimble and always moved away in time, so that I assumed the aspect of a quite extraordinary being. In the end my nymph, or Muse (as I always called young Amélie) inspired a more personal interest; especially after I had seen her in the street and discovered that she had a pretty foot and wore high slender heels, a charm which in itself was enough to turn my head. I grew more assiduous than ever, especially when my connection with Élise and Virginie came finally to an end, and I had disposed of my *Gynographes*, which appeared early in 1777. After this I worked upon certain *Juvénales du Hibou* (the origin of my *Nuits de Paris*), revised my *Quadragénaire* and composed some of the early *Contemporaines*, so that my mind was not overburdened! For about eight months an evening never passed without a visit to my Muse's window. Suzette Monclar, the third daughter, sat next to Amélie (who came from Brussels) and Victorine, the second, next to Améthyste. Constance, the sister of a young man who was courting the eldest Mlle Monclar, shared a table at the far end of the room with the other two pupils, one of whom was very plain and the other very pretty. The latter belonged to well-to-do people of the quarter and ate and slept at home. In Améthyste's absence, Amélie and not Victorine kept the books and took the place of the mistress. All this I could see for myself, without needing to be told. I looked forward to the evening with the impatience of a schoolboy waiting for a game of hide-and-seek, and on the stroke of eight flew to the Rue de Grenelle and began my impromptus. The attention of my audience flattered me. I had found the secret of interesting seven or eight young girls, who were all unusually pretty even for Parisians; and the holes for the window pins were so convenient for inserting notes, unperceived by any but her for whom they were intended, that I took to writing every day. This was the pleasantest part of my pastime. In my first letter I portrayed myself without flattery; I praised the recipient of it by name; then, having folded my letter fan-wise (as I used to do for Zéphire and more recently for Zéphirette) so that it would pass through a hole scarcely an inch in diameter, I hastened to my window, my heart beating for joy (so true is it that men are always children!) and began my singing. Directly I had attracted Amélie's attention, I slipped my note through the hole. She felt it behind her, she started and then, reassured, she took it. Next I ran to the window on the Rue Honoré to watch the expression of her face through an opening in the curtains. She looked pleased, although she blushed and lowered her eyes. At closing time the daughters of the house went upstairs to their mother, with the exception of Victorine. Then Amélie displayed my letter and read it aloud to the other girls, who listened breathlessly, while I watched them with inexpressible delight. I congratulated myself on having found a distraction which did not expose me to the dangers of love (for, in spite of what I have said about Rose Bourgeois, one must talk and touch to fall physically in love). Then they would discuss my letter, and I could catch a word here and there when they raised their voices, as the younger girls often did. From what followed I realised that they had agreed to accept all my letters and read them together. As for me I found this such an agreeable pastime that it became my sole recreation. I found ample material for my letters in the conduct suitable to young persons, lightening my dissertations with little stories, of which I would give them the equivalent of about three printed pages one evening, and the continuation on the next. My *Quadragénaire* is entirely composed of these little stories, but for publication I detached them from their context, only including one or two of the shortest of my letters to these young girls, under the title of *L'Amour par Lettres* – a title which my *Nouvel Abeilard*, composed in the following year, satisfied much more completely.

Thus whatever the distractions, whatever the licence I allowed myself, I never wasted my time. When I committed some stupidity or blunder I consoled myself with the thought: *That has taught me something*; I learned my lesson and then wrote to instruct others at my expense. I am a great fabulist who takes himself, instead of animals, for his mouthpiece; I am a multiple animal, sometimes cunning as the fox, sometimes dense and slow and stupid as a donkey or an ant-eater; often proud and courageous as a lion, at times slinking and carrion as the wolf; now an eagle or a vulture, now a simple sparrowhawk; most often a wounded partridge or lark. I display myself in all these forms; I am the hero of a fable wherein I play the part of all these animals. . . . Virginie alone gave me the material for five works. *Le Paysan* is a romantic version of my own adventures, nothing more; *Le Nouvel Abeilard* contains three or four stories about myself, and *La Femme-trois-états* five or six. When I was keeping Virginie and when later I kept Sara, these were so many experiments at my own expense. I have done a hundred foolish things to gain knowledge, whether for *Le Pornographe* or for *La Mimographe.* If I did wrong (which is possible) it was not with any ill-intention. Take this example: if anyone had seen me amusing myself with a milliner's work girls, what would he have thought of me? Probably he would have felt a profound contempt for me; yet which of us would be the fool? For after all I was not amusing myself to no purpose; I mingled utility with pleasure; I did harm to no one and least of all to the young girls to whom I wrote. My letters contained sound morality; no method of seduction was used in them; I entertained some pretty children without danger to themselves; I took and gave some innocent recreation. . . . No doubt I provided them with something which they will long remember, a story which they will tell to their children. . . . And this hope of being remembered in their tales is very sweet to me!

I had a second letter to Mlle Amélie with me on the evening after I had delivered the first, but I was obliged to wait for a long time before Mme Monclar went upstairs. However, she went at last; a thin thread of music wafting through the window announced my presence, and all were at once attentive. I pushed my note through the hole and Amélie showed it at once to her companions. It began by describing everything that I had seen or heard the evening before as though by divination, and their astonishment redoubled. My letter was read and the interest it aroused was really affecting. Of Mme Monclar's daughters only Victorine was present; I had anticipated this and praised her beauty, not a difficult task with her fine eyes, exquisite colouring, and adorable little mouth.

We had reached the end of September 1777 when, drunk with success, I came near to stultifying my plan of conduct by making myself known. I asked Amélie to grant me an interview on Sunday the 6th of October, promising to enter the shop that evening after the lights were lit (that is to say between seven and eight o'clock) provided she were alone. They must have caught a glimpse of me as I stood in front of the house, for, directly I approached the door, Amélie's companions withdrew by the door at the back of the shop so as to leave Amélie alone. Emboldened by her complaisance, I was on the point of entering when a reflection gave me pause. "What have I to say to a young person who can and should listen only to a man in a position to marry?" My hand was on the door knob, but I did not turn it. I withdrew, and presently the girls returned and there was much laughter, especially on Amélie's part. I observed them adroitly, and made this scene the subject of a letter which would always remind me of the amusement they afforded me. In it I claimed that Amélie's only object in granting my request was that I should be overheard by her companions; I said that I was aware of her intention and proved my statement by quoting certain passing words which I had caught that Sunday evening. I carefully watched the effect of this letter, which Amélie, after first reading it to herself, showed only to Victorine and Constance, both mature and sensible girls. From that moment all my letters were burnt, but I went on writing none the less, as they were never burnt until after they had been read.

I continued to amuse myself in this way into 1778, when Amélie returned to Flanders. Towards the end she paid little attention to my songs and never touched my letters; Constance was the one to take them from the hole. From this I realised that she must at first have taken me seriously and been flattered by my homage; and indeed to write the tenderest letters without ever letting oneself be seen, and that for a considerable time, is the surest way of making oneself an object of interest. I was eagerly awaited every evening, and unaffected delight shone in every face at my coming. I was none the less interesting because I had said that there was little to attract in my appearance, and it is certain that if I had been free to present myself on the 6th of October, either Amélie or Constance or Victorine would have been drawn to me simply on account of my preliminaries.

On the 15th of December, 1779, Constance wrote me the only letter I ever received from these young persons; it is quoted in *La Malédiction*

Paternelle, p. 611.* I composed an answer in which I promised to write the *Story of my Life*, based on my own letters and those I had received. Such was the origin of the work I have just quoted (*La Malédiction Paternelle*) and consequently of this one. The former was partly concerned with the misfortunes of others; but I also introduced some of my own to make myself more interesting to Constance, and secondarily to Victorine, whom I preferred to any of the others with the exception of Amélie.

This sweet girl departed at last. For three years she had renewed my youth by restoring those exquisite evening pleasures I was wont to taste with Zéphire; blameless pleasures unclouded by remorse, and so delicious, that my heart would quicken two hours before the moment of enjoying them. When I look back over my life I cannot but admit that the years 1777, 1778 and the early months of 1779 were its calmest period, for my pleasures then were sweet and uninterrupted, yet unmixed with impatience or jealousy. . . . The period which followed, that is to say the rest of 1779 up to the end of August 1780, was a time of suffering and deadness. But on the 1st of September I felt a return of energy, and wrote *La Paysanne pervertie* in thirty days. This ebullition prepared the way for a collapse of which the consequences were most distressing, and which convinced me of something that Virginie had only hinted at. . . . Let us return to the Author for a moment.

Les Gynographes formed the third volume of my *Idées Singulières* and was composed during 1776 and 1777. The first part was occupied with a scheme for the reformation of the morals and customs of the other sex; the second is a compilation of feminine customs and usages throughout the world. I have mentioned *Le Quadragénaire*, but the stories contained in it were written so carelessly and hurriedly that I contradict myself twice. In it I try to prove that young girls will be happier with and more tenderly loved by a man of forty than by a young man. Parts of my letters to Amélie are contained in it, the reasons for my behaviour with regard to Élise and Virginie, and something about a pretty little Jewess named *Lange*. After this I wrote some short stories, the first that occur in *Les Contemporaines*. Finally I began *L'Amour par Lettres*, the idea for which was given me by my recent diversions with Amélie and her companions. But it was barren stuff, with no richness in it; it showed the need of having conversed with my Muse. Another Muse, to whom I spoke no more than I had to Amélie but who inspired infinitely more intense desire, supplied what was wanting to me.

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*If any of the books here quoted should go out of print, my publishers can find and insert in their proper places the passages and facts here referred to, in a complete set of my works which I have preserved and will hand over with this manuscript.

As I was leaving my lodging in the Rue de Bièvre one day I saw a girl in front of me whose figure, legs and feet were delightful. She was wearing very high heels and moved with soft provocative grace. I hoped to catch a glimpse of her face but she entered a house at the corner of the *Rue Victor*. Every day I returned to the same spot in hopes of meeting her again, but it was a long time before I caught sight of her in a pork butcher's shop, and found that she was the mistress's daughter. I have never seen a woman who more appealed to me. It is impossible to imagine a fresher, nobler or more agreeable face. Her hair and eyebrows were black, her skin of a dazzling whiteness; she had beautiful eyes, her voice was clear, vibrant and pleasing; she was seductively clean about her dress, and especially about that part of it which is not easily kept so in Paris streets. Such was V*ictoire Londeau*, who inspired my second *Modèle* entitled *La Philosophie des Maris*. To write this pleasant little story I only had to imagine that I was *Dupile* and Mlle Londeau *Julie*, and then let my heart take up the tale. I described my own behaviour in such case; I portrayed her as loved, adored and cherished, as I should have loved, adored and cherished her. I knew not a single incident in her life, what need was there to know? I did not want to write this fair girl's story as it was, but as I would have been charmed to play a part in it. Victoire was not my only Muse for this work; I had Amélie and eight or nine others besides. "What vulgar tastes!" some snob will say. "He finds the daughter of a . . . a masterpiece of Nature, of beauty and of amiability. . . ." Honest Reader, I too have known princesses, duchesses and marchionesses, of whom one or two were adorable; a charming countess also and some beautiful and brilliant young ladies . . . but not one of them was equal to my daughter, Victoire Londeau. . . .

At the corner of the Rue de Bièvre, opposite the *Grands-Degrés*, lived a carpenter's widow named *Poinot.* She had two daughters: Rosalie, the elder, was a pleasant-looking, well-built girl, whose exquisite taste made her ravishing without being beautiful; she excited my admiration. Sophie, the younger, was attractive in a different manner, she was a lively and ingenuous young person, white skinned, slightly proportioned and dainty. They were my Muses for the fifth Modèle, called *La Partie Carré. Victoire* is the eldest Poinot, *Florence*, her younger sister. *Sophie* is Mlle Londeau used in a different way, and her younger sister, Mlle *Scofon*, is *Marianne.*

Mlle *Laurens*, daughter of the lovely and famous jeweller opposite the Opera, was my Muse for the third *Modèle*, or *L'Amour enfantin.* She was a pretty blonde, and when I used to see her in former days, I had woven a pleasant fantasy about her which I embodied in this Modèle, wherein I call her Philis. The shop is now occupied by a clockmaker, young Mme Filon.

Mlle *Manette-Aurore Parizot*, the daughter of a furrier who still lives next door to the old auditorium of the Comédie-Française, was the principal heroine of my fourth *Modèle*, or *L'Amour muet.* In accordance with my usual method, I visualised myself as the lover and, following the dictates of my heart, made him act as I would have acted. It is possible to love several women at the same time if one never speaks to them, for it is to love but one: it is to love Beauty and the Graces. But make the acquaintance of a single woman, and she will expel all the others. (And yet that is not absolutely true of our corrupt coxcombs, nor even of myself.)

Chance gave me my plot for the sixth *Modèle: À quoi sert le Mérite?* I was walking along the Quai d'Anjou, meditating on *L'Amour enfantin*, when a pretty woman came out of a house, accompanied by a man. She was so beautiful that my gaze was held by her charms. The man noticed this and, seeing that I was wearing an old blue surtout, he remarked to the lady: "Your beauty touches even the rudest soul!" I was not in the least wounded but continued to gaze at the lady. Then the man, or rather coxcomb, addressed me: "Pass on, my good fellow. Your notice is offensive to Madame!" "Your insolence is much more offensive to me," I replied. "The creature can think!" I was still looking admiringly at the young woman. "I am a man; Madame is beautiful, and the homage that I render is worthy of her." The lady smiled at me, and I continued: "A beautiful woman is the flower of the human race; not every man has the right to pluck her, but anyone may admire her. . . ." The fop listened with impatience, but the young woman looked at me kindly and responded to my speech with a slight bow accompanied by a charming smile; and, as I went away, I heard her say: "I do not know who that man is, but whatever the weather, he is always to be seen wandering about the island, and writing from time to time upon the stone. . . ." (As a matter of fact, such was my habit; I noted the ideas that occurred to me during these peregrinations for fear that they should escape me.) I abandoned *L'Amour enfantin* immediately after this meeting, knowing that I could always return to it, and set to work on my *Modèle: À quoi sert le mérite?*, in which, without doing him any harm, I avenge myself on the fop who had disparaged me.

One interesting little incident in this important work is true to the letter; it is called *Le Petit Ménage*, and happened to a journeyman printer. Although by nature modest and unpretentious, I have always had a high esteem for myself, and expect any printer I employ to respect me as a copyist should respect his original. *L'Amour par Lettres*, or *Le Nouvel Abeilard*, was printed with André Cailleau, the widow Duchesne's brother, and to accelerate the work and prevent my mind from turning to other things, I used to help the printer, even working on Sundays. His wife tried to prevent me from doing so, and I was obliged to repress her foolish impertinence.

When I was rid of *Le Nouvel Abeilard*, to which I had been inspired by my young beauties, I had a vivid and luminous idea, worthy of the *Paysan-Paysanne perverti*! Remembering all that my father used to tell us in my childhood concerning his stay in Paris and Mlle Pombelins, and the numerous anecdotes which I had heard from his lips, I set myself to write the life of Edme Restif. I never revised this little work, but handed it over to the printers as I finished the manuscript. It is told without art or adornment, for memory took the place of imagination. For the second and third editions I only corrected a few faults in style and inserted some incidents I had forgotten. This production had an immediate success, an amazing thing considering it contained no appeal to our young sparks, nor anything in disparagement of women or philosophy. Only honest folk would buy it, and apparently for the first time these set the fashion. . . . It was in *La Vie de mon Père* that I ventured to suggest that priests should marry.

In the following year I reprinted two of my books: *La Confidence Nécessaire* in two parts, and *La Femme dans les Trois États* in three; *Le Pornographe, La Fille Naturelle,* and *Le Pied de Fanchette* had been reprinted in 1774-1775. These novels (for I will say nothing about *Le Pornographe*, a great work which I consider an honour to me; it will bear fruit one day and its valuable suggestions be put into effect, as usual too late),* these novels, I repeat, were eagerly sought after and they nourished me at a time when Gauguery, Edme Rapenot and their like, seconded by our Leclercs and Reinruofs, etc., were leaving me to starve. Up to 1790 I was no one's debtor; all my life I had been giving. If I had died in that year none would have ever seen me a beggar as were *Nip* and *Duan*, nor a pensioner as was *de la Harpe*, nor maintained by my wife's lovers, as was *Xueiss*, nor hired by my colleagues or the booksellers to the vile employment of extracting ideas from others, as were *Delaporte, Rondet, Querlon, Delacroix-Hydrophore, Sautereau,* etc.; nor prostituting my life to the paltry business of defaming the works of others as did Father *Freron, Aubert-La-Vrillère, Rémy, Royoux, Grozier, Geoffroy, Terrin, Ane-Licol-Malin*† (the two last I rescue from complete oblivion by mentioning their names here) and a hundred other vile insects. . . . Up to this year I could pay my way, by economising the

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*I wrote this in 1784; in 1786 Emperor Joseph the Reformer executed my scheme in Vienna. *Gazette de Leyde*, the 6th of December, 1786.

†A. L. Millin, editor of the *Magasin encyclopédique.* [Ed.]

income of a thousand crowns left to me by my father, in the following manner:

On dress from head to foot, one thousand francs saved a year	1000 francs.
Further, on food, by abstinence and eating nothing but what was absolutely necessary	1000 francs.
Further, by hard work, and making better use of my time than other men	1000 francs.
Total	3000 francs.

So far my inheritance was clear, but my father also left me about six thousand livres in landed property, of which I never received more than a thousand crowns, as my brother the peasant, to whom I sold my share, only paid half of what he owed. I mention this in no reproachful spirit. I lost gladly to my brother, and if I had had no children, would have freely given him all this small inheritance to save the La Bretonne estate from being cut up.

La Malédiction paternelle followed immediately upon *La Vie de mon Père.* As I have said, I wrote this novel to interest Amélie's fellow worker, young Constance, in my favour, and by including the charming episode of Zéphire and our parties on the Montmartre slopes, I chose the way to succeed. I also inserted Élise's letters. My censor Mairobert died while this book was being printed, and it was never completely initialed: Dhemmery knew nothing about it, Desmarolles had left the office, and Le Goupil had perished in an iron cage on Mont-Michel. But in compensation, Mairobert, having decided to do away with himself, initialed all my *Juvénales,* which were afterwards inserted into the combined edition of the *Paysan-Paysanne perverti,* in *Les Françaises* and in *La Découverte Australe,* etc

During the same period I returned to my vast work, *Les Contemporaines*, the composition of which was not completed until November the 14th of this year 1784, and of which the printing will not be finished until June 1785.

Before passing on to other matters I must observe that the forty-two volumes of *Les Contemporaines*, containing two hundred and seventy-two *Nouvelles* and four hundred and forty-four short stories, not counting the framework, only took me six years to write, during which period I also composed *La Découverte Australe* in four volumes; *La Dernière Aventure d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq Ans; L'Anthropographe* or *L'Homme Reformé* in two 8vo volumes, which is a companion volume to *Les Gynographes* and *La Prévention Nationale* in three volumes. I also reprinted the four volumes of *Le Paysan perverti*; wrote and printed the four volumes of *La Paysanne;* combined these two books and reprinted them in eight volumes; and finally reprinted the first thirty volumes of *Les Contemporaines.* I revised every reprint, reading all three proofs as for the first edition. This makes a total output which is unimaginable and yet is none the less a fact, seeing that I did it, and that while I was suffering from chest trouble and a wasting discharge. Thus in six years I printed eighty-five volumes, all of which I read three times. Add to this, necessary correspondence and more than a thousand pages of my Autobiography, also written in the course of these six years, and a little calculation will give some idea of my industry. This was necessary in order to exist, and shows to what excessive toil a man of letters, if he be poor, is driven in order to maintain life. All those who worked less hard than I and were equally deficient in means, such as *Duan, Dourxigné, Prévot-d'Éxiles, Du Rosoy, T . . ., P . . ., Dech,* and *Nilli,* either starved or had recourse to vile expedients; while I, with my hard upbringing and privations, was, up to 1790, always spending, always giving; I have never received any help from those about me. Sometimes I sacrificed a little to pleasure, but I repeat that such expenditure always tended to some useful end; I was forced to get information before I could write on certain subjects, and personal experience was the only way to perfect knowledge. During 1755, 6, 7, 8, 9 and 1761, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9 I used to visit public women in order to write *Le Pornographe:* while I was writing my *Mimographe*, in 1769, 70 and 71, I spent money on theatres; I kept Virginie in 1776 and Sara in 1780 in order to find out exactly how a man in this position is treated. Such things are or should be permitted to an author, who incurs personal risks in order to give others the benefit of his experience. In 1793 Citizen *Delisle* told me emphatically that *La Dernière Aventure d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq Ans* was a valuable book. I withdrew five girls from prostitution, each of whom cost me eight hundred livres. The financial embarrassment caused by the production of the hundred and twenty illustrations of the *Paysan-Paysanne perverti* for a long time precluded any kind of expenditure on pleasure; and would have made it impossible for me to dower my eldest daughter, even had I not had other and stronger reasons for not doing so. . . .

But we must return to the end of 1778. At this time Agnès Lebègue's pupils were withdrawn through the contrivances of Mme Lacroix and Javote Ornefuri,* and she set up as a milliner in Joigny; but she was not industrious enough and, after having sold everything and lost all her money, returned to Paris with Marion Restif, my youngest daughter, now fourteen years old.

After her return I continued living alone in the Rue de Bièvre, in the

*Javote Fournier [Ed.]

house of a certain Mme Debée, or Debie-Leeman, a woman with whom we shall soon be better acquainted. . . . Misfortune and a conviction of her incapacity had produced some change in Agnès Lebègue's disposition; from being peevish, insolent and intolerable, she had become almost complacent and submissive, or it may have been wily and politic. Also it must be admitted that she was impressed by such little reputation as I had acquired. I took my meals with her, paying her for my board.

Then young Marion caused us great trouble. She ran away from her mother and happily! took refuge with some pious ladies in the Rue Mouffetard, by name Garnier, with whom she remained for five years. Too busy to support the troubles of my household, I ceased all visits to Agnès Lebègue for about six months from the 25th of March, 1779, on which day I perceived the first symptoms of my wasting discharge. They frightened me! I went to see Mairobert the same day, ill and unhappy, and related my troubles to him. He wept for me and put his purse and credit at my disposal, saying: "How many people whom one thinks happy are on the verge of despair!" They were the last words he ever said to me. Two days later he cut his veins in *Poitevin's* baths, and shot himself in the mouth. I can never forgive that cowardly (or unlucky) *Linguet* for having defamed him after his death, an event which I commemorate annually with my tears. . . . With the coming of summer I put on a little fat, and my fears abated; but on the 5th of November I developed chest trouble through getting overheated at the case. Agnès Lebègue built up my strength again by giving me somewhat richer food than usual. . . . Here I will insert an incident which, though it began in 1779, was not concluded until after my adventure with Sara.

In the early stages of my acquaintance with Bultel I conceived a sort of passion for a married woman, which nearly betrayed me into a serious impropriety! She is the heroine of the 30th *Contemporaine, La Surprise de l'Amour*, which was composed a long time before I made my important discovery. It is impossible to describe the mental turmoil she produced in me! A young and charming woman, named Mme de Glancé, the wife of a lawyer, lived in the house in which Agnès Lebègue had taken a room on leaving the Ile Saint-Louis, where she had lodged for three months after her return from Joigny. I had not seen her when Agnès Lebègue first spoke of her in terms, as I thought, of hyperbole; nor did I condescend to verify her statements, as I had never found them justified; she had no praise for anything but lifeless beauty in her own sex. However, happening to glance one day towards the second floor windows which looked over the courtyard, I caught sight of a superb blonde, with hair more thickly clustering and more beautiful in colour than ever female of our species had to adorn her pretty head. I was dumbfounded; but after a few moments I found words to ask who the angelic person was. "The young lady of whom I spoke to you." "It is the first time that you have shown good taste in women. . . ." Scarcely had I gone out before Agnès Lebègue hastened to repeat my eulogies to the Beauty. A woman is always flattered by admiration, be it from horse or ass or serpent; therefore when, on my return, I took my place at the window to gaze upon my charmer, I was greeted with a most enchanting smile. I returned this salutation with emotion, and our friendship dated from the evening of that very day. Next day we breakfasted together. The day after, which was the eve of Mme de Glancé's departure for her country house at Morsan, she and her husband invited us to supper, and on this occasion Mme de Glancé's gifts and graces were displayed in their fullness. I was completely captivated, as in 89 I was to be captivated by Louise's daughter, that charming Alanette (or Filette as I used to call her before knowing her for what she was) whom I lost three months after Thérèse in 96, a year of terrible suffering and as calamitous to me at the present time as 57 was in the past! . . . I pined for Mme de Glancé, I wept for her. . . . Her absence was prolonged up to the 25th of November and at last, wearying for her, I wrote proposing that we should unite ourselves in the bonds of tenderest friendship. Her husband saw the letter and tried to convince her that it was love I wanted. The fair de Glancé was forced to protect her reputation, so, against her will and despite the pain it caused her, she feigned anger at my letter. This I learned from gossip between the servants. I was wounded to the quick, not by the injustice done to me but rather by a too accurate divination of the truth. Never had self-esteem such power over me as on this occasion. I made a firm resolution. . . . But too like my beautiful blonde as far as behaviour was concerned, I found outlet for my violent emotion in one of the best *Nouvelles* in my Collection, *Les Contemporaines*, and in what measure I adored my fair neighbour can there be seen. . . . She came back at last in the month of November, and then I carried out the resolution I had made. Two days after her arrival I dressed myself in my best and, directly I had seen the lawyer Glancé and his friend *Le Xuor* leave the house, I presented myself at the door. I was welcomed as a real friend, for instinct recognises true friendship. Mme de Glancé was charming, and my resolution suffered a severe shock! She talked about her stay in the country. I alluded to my letter, but she glided over the subject and I did not insist. In the course of conversation she mentioned her father, M. *Lhuil*, and told me the circumstances of her marriage, but without entering into any of those details which might have enlightened me.

"Your second daughter," she said, "is a very sweet and amiable girl!" "Yes, she is an amiable child, but her mother speaks harshly to her." "Has she changed, then?" "The child has left her." "Good heavens! . . . I heard something about it. . . . Still . . . I am told that the ladies she is with are very pious?" "May she never be like them!" "You only have the two daughters?" "N . . . no." "You seem to hesitate?" "I was . . . thinking about something. . . . So many things happen in life . . . strange things!" "Yes, that is true of mine, and it has not gone very far yet!" "Ah, but you have known nothing but happiness! Beautiful, young, married to an . . . amiable man, four years a mother, so that at your age your daughter is a . . . companion rather than a child. . . ." She smiled: "You credit me with more good fortune than I have." "I only say what is true." She sighed: "Husbands are sometimes very ill-advised!" "That is not true of yours; M. de Glancé is prudence itself." She raised her eyes to heaven: "Prudence itself may err unwittingly!" I confess that her friendly confidential manner, her touching ingenuousness enchanted me. I had meant to tell her my decision . . . but I restrained myself. . . . Le Xuor, an officer friend of her husband who always lived with them during the winter, came in, so I took my departure and, going to the Ile Saint-Louis, there swore that I would never enter Mme de Glancé's house again. Was it jealousy? . . . Again I made a great mistake, as can be seen by the sequel (see the end of my *Calendar*). Alas, I have always had a mania for leaving those I love just at the wrong moment. . . . Why did I rend my heart by flying from Louise and Thérèse? Why this blundering virtue in one who has so often been found wanting when it was required? O poor Nicolas, I exclaim at times, how many faults you have committed, and will commit until you draw your last breath, in spite of an honest soul, and a freedom from all the coarser vices! May this bring some comfort to those who, being guilty of faults and even crimes, are on the verge of giving way to discouragement! As they read this Human Heart Unveiled they may be fortunate enough to be able to reflect: *I am not so guilty as he was; let us repent as he did and return to good ways!* . . . We shall see that I bungled my business affairs in the same way. It was almost always my fault that I lost on my books. . . . My feelings for Mme de Glancé should have enlightened me; they were tender but not licentious; she did not rouse desire. She is the only woman (save Mme Parangon) for whom I have experienced the singular feeling of wishing that she were less beautiful! Though I think, perhaps, I felt the same about Jeannette Rousseau. . . . Nor was this, as may be thought, that I might love less, but that my love might be more generous. I have seen the same sort of feeling in good parents, who will cherish an ill-made or defective child more tenderly than those to whom nature has been kinder.

I was walking down the Faubourg Jacques one day when, just by the *Rue Dominique-Luxembourg*, I was greeted by a woman of forty-five whom I could not place. I begged her to help my memory. "I did not recognise you either," she answered, "but a Mme Giet, who has only just left me, told me your name. I am Reine Giraud." "Ah, I have never forgotten you, and now I recognise you." "My sister keeps a c . . . shop at the corner of the *Rue Victor*. She had a daughter, the fair Victoire, and so did I. . . . We said nothing to you about them on your return to Paris, knowing that you were married." "Explain, my dear Reine." "Oh, it is a long story! You already know the daughter of my sister and yourself; they say that you have put her into one of your books, unaware of the relationship between you. . . . As for mine, she is supposed to have died. Our landlord, a grocer, thought her a pretty child and sent her to a nurse within a league of his own daughter, who was a year older, so he often used to see both children. Little Mlle *Lhuill* died, and as her father was fond of my daughter, he appropriated her as his own and gave out that it was my child who had died. My mother, my sister Edmée and myself were quite prepared to acknowledge the child; but as the grocer's daughter she had excellent prospects, so, for her own sake we let him keep her. My *Éléonore* grew up, we held our tongues, and now she is married to a lawyer. She is rich, she is beautiful, and doubtless she is happy. . . . That is enough for us, but I want to tell her the truth now that her supposed father is dead. . . . She has two daughters." "And what is her name?" "That I can tell you . . . it is Mme de Glancé." "Mme de Glancé! . . ." I was inexpressibly astonished, and went away lost in thought. But by that time I was aware of the fair Glancé's adventure with Le Xuor, an adventure with which I shall conclude my *Calendar*. . . . To return to my productions.

Two thousand *Les Contemporaines* were printed. Widow Duchesne took the eighteen volumes of *Les Contemporaines mêlées*; *Belin* the twelve volumes which followed, *Les Contemporaines de Commun*, and these two booksellers shared the twelve final volumes, *Les Contemporaines Graduées*. The veracity of these short stories caused me endless trouble. Young Etteugaled* attacked me one day under cover of darkness and assured me, in his childish rage, that there were two hundred people in Paris who had sworn to have my blood. They have but to leave nature and poverty to do their work and their wish will soon be fulfilled. . . . The heroine of my eighteenth *Nouvelle* felt obliged to make a fuss; the heroine of the sixth did not dare to do so, and so forth. . . . Later *Guillot* printed *Les Françaises, Les Parisiennes* and *Les Filles du Palais Royal*. Garnery has *Les Provinciales*.

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*Delaguette, son of the printer. [Ed.]

These various sequels (to the number of seven) combined with *Les Contemporaines* proper form a collection of at least one thousand and fifty short stories in sixty-five volumes.

This is how I lived:

I never drank wine save in company; I ate little and of the simplest; I lodged on the fourth floor, and only had the necessary furniture.

I never had a fire save when others were working with me; for myself, I wrote in bed. But this practice is dangerous both to health and morals; often on going out I would be seized with a fit of eroticism, due to overheating in bed. A feeble excuse! I have not bought a suit since 1773 (December the 6th, 1796). I am in need of shirts.

My daily wear is an ancient blue surtout, the oldest of my garments. All my money goes in the preparation of editions on which, since 1789, I (but not the booksellers) have lost consistently.

It was my desire, before these losses, to leave fifty thousand livres in landed property as did my father. But now I consider that that is excessive, since it would be impossible for every citizen to leave as much. To do so there would have to be more than one milliard, four hundred million acres of arable, vine, meadow and wood land in France, at the present average price of a hundred and fifty livres the acre. Therefore, if certain men have much more than fifty thousand francs, a multitude of individual heads of families must have much less or nothing at all. Thus a really honest man – a magistrate or minister of religion – should not, to be strictly just, possess more than his share, to wit, landed property to the value of about fifty livres, over and above plenishings of all kinds and every other type of wealth upon which, thanks to commerce, no bounds need be set. But how unprofitable would an equal division of land be for its cultivation! Proper exploitation would be impossible! Therefore the present abuses must continue, and twenty million persons out of every twenty-five be destitute of land in order that there may be big farms to exploit it on a scale suitable to supply the markets. Therefore my indigence does not worry me, and I leave myself in Nature's hands.

Mendicancy is an abuse which has sprung up under the existing social order, and one which was introduced and almost consecrated by the Christian religion; for it did not exist among the Greeks or Romans, save in the case of old slaves abandoned by their masters. But amongst modern peoples it has become a shameless imposition. I have always had a horror of it. Only lack of work or illness justifies a man in begging, given that society undertakes to provide for the subsistence of the destitute. But to prevent begging in the absence of such provision or to repress it by punishment instead of remedying it, is a barbarity reserved to modern governments, and I warn them that this unjust law impoverishes the human race, extinguishing, by a horrible crime, generation on generation of persons who might one day have produced useful men, and who every day add a few such to society. . . .

I will give no analysis of *La Découverte Australe* here, nor of *Les Contemporaines*, but, when we come to the end of 1780, I shall retrace the facts of *La Dernière Aventure d'un Homme de Quarante-cinq Ans*. Memory will be my only guide in depicting this, the most extraordinary and most unhappy passion that I have ever yet experienced.

I had completed the four volumes of *La Paysanne* in thirty days, and my ailing chest and exhausted brain demanded rest. This I took, going more often to the theatres and coffee-houses than was my wont, and confining myself to the writing of a *Nouvelle* from time to time. My *Contemporaines* sold rapidly, and an agreeable prospect lay before me. I had just conceived the plan of illustrating my *Paysan*, and the idea pleased me. I worked with enjoyment, and I was spiritually less wretched than in 1779. Yet I had had a violent storm to weather during the summer. A certain Mme Laugé, who was mentioned by name in my eighteenth *Nouvelle*, lodged a complaint against me, at the instigation of Dhemmery the policeman and Goulin the visiting doctor, etc., and wanted to prosecute. M. *Bachois*, judge at the criminal court, proved himself a worthy magistrate and, thanks to his wisdom and the help given me by the celebrated *Beaumarchais*, I was extricated. The latter interviewed the lady named at her lawyer's and read my *Nouvelle* to her himself. There was nothing in it to offend her, and she bore me no ill will for it; she even seemed pleased with an anecdote which the reader will find agreeable. Thus the case ended.

END OF THE FIFTH VOLUME

AND

END OF THE TENTH VOLUME IN RESTIF'S EDITION.

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS
PROJECTED BY THE AUTHOR
FOR THIS VOLUME

95. LE PIED DE FANCHETTE

Monsieur Nicolas standing at the door of a milliner's shop in the Rue Tiquetonne examining the pretty feet and slender legs of a young girl: “Gad, how appetising you are!”

In the background, Mme Lévêque in dainty slippers. [*page 220*]

96. MANON WALLON AND COLETTE BOREL

Monsieur Nicolas freely caressing Manon Wallon and Colette, just as Théodore, the latter's lover and the former's brother, is entering: “Love them dearly if you want me to love them even more than I do already!” [*page 232*]

97. ÉLISE, LISETTE, ÉLISETTE

Monsieur Nicolas drunk with joy in the arms of Élise, who is saying to him: “See how fond I should be!”

In the background, Lisette leading Élisette by the hand. [*page 243*]

98. AT F. A. QUILLAU'S

Monsieur Nicolas being caressed by an intimate of Mme Quillau. The latter is holding the door ajar and watching all that is passing: “I feel faint!” [*page 245*]

99. VICTOIRE-SAINTONGE AND FANCHONETTE

Monsieur Nicolas at Victoire's apartment in the Rue Saintonge, Le Marais. She has been dancing and, still upon her toes, is pointing to the sofa: “I know another!”

In the background Monsieur Nicolas catching sight of Fanchonette walking down the Rue Saint-Jacques. [*page 253*]

100. THE TERRIBLE ILLNESS

Monsieur Nicolas lying on his pallet; a young and pretty half-breed is caressing him and his daughter Agnès, aged eight, is at his feet.

The vast unfurnished room is papered with imaginary pictures: the first, clear-toned, shows Agnès Lebègue provoking him to make love; the second, darker toned, shows Agnès Lebègue and the Abbé Higonnet; the third, executed as the former, Agnès Lebègue displaying her sick husband to Coulet. [*page 263*]

101. REINE SEPTIMANETTE, OR THE PASSENGER BOAT

Monsieur Nicolas on deck with Reine-Septimanette; he is pointing to the reeds which seem, by their bowing, to salute her: "They know that you are Queen!"

On the clouds are two pictures: 1 – Monsieur Nicolas caressing Reine in a nurses' room; 2 – Reine saluting him as she steps from the skiff on to the bank with her two companions. [*page 266*]

102. HOW HE CHARMS AWAY HIS GRIEFS

Monsieur Nicolas in the apartment of Celeste and Julie Bertrand; the latter is pointing to her sister: "I want her to taste all natural pleasures."

First incidental picture: Ruffier introduced to Julie.

Second: Monsieur Nicolas meeting Adélaïde Lhuillier at evening, relieving her of her bundle and offering his arm. [*page 269*]

103. LOUISE AND THÉRÈSE

Monsieur Nicolas clasping Louise to him; one arm is extended to circle Thérèse's waist: "Farewell!"

In the dim background, Monsieur Nicolas kissing Louise's open lips; he is afraid of waking her. [*page 293*]

104. THE PRETTY SHOES

Monsieur Nicolas holding Panette's feet upon his knee, admiring their pretty shape and comparing them with those of Agnès Restif. Agnès: *"Equal."* Panette: *"Yours are better." "No!" "Yes!"*

Picture: Panette in a swoon with Monsieur Nicolas opening the windows. [*page 307*]

105. VIRGINIE AT BICÊTRE

Monsieur Nicolas and Virginie kneeling in the church at Bicêtre: "To whom is this altar?" "To the Virgin." [*page 339*]

106. THE PRISONER

Monsieur Nicolas among the cells with Virginie and the priest Paterne. They are in the second court, staring at a young prisoner who has just been locked up in a ground floor cell. Virginie watches him kiss the cat which she has just been fondling. . . . She takes a step forward, the guard holds his bayonette across the way: "You cannot approach!"

In the dim background: Monsieur Nicolas accosting Aimonde Dartois. [*page 345*]

107. SAINT-OVIDE FAIR

Monsieur Nicolas with Virginie and her mother at the Saint-Ovide fair: "That is the prettiest thing in the fair!" [*page 369*]

108. ZÉPHIRETTE

Monsieur Nicolas to Zéphirette, standing at the shop door: "I made love to your grandmother," etc. [*page 383*]

109. AMÉTHYSTE

Monsieur Nicolas seeing Améthyste throw away the rough copy of a letter, torn up and squeezed into a ball. "She has been writing; Let's have a look!" [*page 383*]

110. VICTOIRE LONDEAU

Monsieur Nicolas admiring Victoire Londeau in her mother's brightly lighted shop: "I have never seen a more radiant woman!" [*page 391*]

111. WITH MME DE GLANCÉ

Monsieur Nicolas holding her hand and saying: "Prudence itself may err unwittingly." [*page 402*]

PRINTED IN GREAT BRITAIN BY ROBERT MACLEHOSE AND CO. LTD.
THE UNIVERSITY PRESS, GLASGOW